

# UNPACK THE ARTS

European residency programme for cultural journalists

AUCH RESIDENCY  
CIRCA FESTIVAL  
24 – 27 OCTOBER 2013

p. 3 AGNE BILIUNAITE **The Contemporary Circus and Francee / Šiuolaikinis Cirkas ir Prancūzija**

p. 20 ALAN MISIEWICZ **“Pour le meilleur et pour le pire”, Always Returning to Each Other / „Pour le meilleur et pour le pire”, czyli wieczne powroty do siebie**

p. 28 DARIO TODOROVIC **All Roads Lead to the Tent / Sve ceste vode prema šatoru**

p. 35 HERMAN BASHIRON MENDOLICCHIO ***In-between Circus. / Circo in-between.***

p. 42 NICO AGUERO **Tout est bien! (Catastrophe et bouleversement) / Tout est bien! (Catastrophe et bouleversement)**

p. 49 PETRA ŽIŠT **“It isn’t good. But it’s all right.” / »Ni dobro. Ampak je v redu.«**

p. 57 TESSA OVERBEEK **Always Keep Exploring – Circus and Cinema / Altijd blijven onderzoeken – Circus en cinema**

p. 64 THOMAS SCHAUPP **“About the seriousness of the joy of performance” / „Über den Ernst der Spielfreude“**

*The articles of Zane Radzobe and Ivana Slunjski will be added later*

# Presentation

Circus arts are an art form like theatre or dance, but have not yet a profound level of intellectual, cultural and institutional recognition it deserves, in Europe as well as at national and local level. Thereby political and financial support to this sector is quite low and there are structural weaknesses. There are strong imbalances in comparison to other creative areas, even when comparing the realities between regions or countries.

Despite the growing success of circus by the audience and programmers, circus arts are not covered by abundant literature, academic research, in-depth articles, reviews,... and artists themselves often experience difficulties in producing theoretical writing that communicates their practice, their creative processes and their productions. They rarely have the chance to exchange with critics and experts from the performing arts on theoretical or conceptual terms.

Also, many art writers are clueless about contemporary circus. Cultural journalists don't know the disciplines and techniques and overall they lack the contextual understanding to tackle a piece's dramaturgical choices, to reference other productions, or to interview artists creating non text-based works.

That's why Circuscentrum and 9 important circus festivals all over Europe conceived Unpack the Arts. Unpack the Arts is a European project – granted by Europe Culture – that provides residencies for cultural journalists in the context

of twelve major festivals programming contemporary circus. The goal of the project is to facilitate the circulation of knowledge and experience, to develop the critical discourses of its participants, and to further the role of the media within the circus arts and contemporary society.

## 12 Residencies - 120 Articles

Unpack the Arts consists of 12 residencies in 8 countries, spread over 2 years (August 2012 – February 2014). Each residency is set within the framework of a festival and follows the same format: over the course of 4 days, the participants contribute to a series of moderated thematic discussions, attend lectures by key circus experts, see 3-5 shows, and meet with and interview programmed artists along with a representative of the host festival. After the residencies, each participating journalist delivers one article. These texts are collected, translated and turned into an online, multilingual publication.

This 10th publication collects the texts of 10 European journalists who attended the residency at CIRCa Festival in Auch, France, 24 to 27 October 2013.

We wish to thank all participants and all collaborators who made this residency a success.

### **KOEN ALLARY**

*Director, Circuscentrum (project leader)*

### **YOHANN FLOCH**

*Adviser*

# The Contemporary Circus and France

(Part 1)

AGNE BILIUNAITE

“So, how are those clowns and bears of yours?” my friends asked me once I had returned from Auch, France, which was the location of the circus festival CIRC*a*, held this year from 18-27 October. Most likely none of them really knew where I had been nor why, let alone that I had gone there as a cultural journalist. After all, the circus, in the understanding of Lithuanians (and the Lithuanian version of Wikipedia), is the grand sum of those acts which have been handed down through history, and is a form of performance united by a similar, recognisable sequence of tricks – boring to many people – that most often includes acrobatics, balancing acts, animal handling, gymnastics, magic, clowns, the vault, and juggling. I’d be lying if I said that the contemporary circus (which I will try to talk about in this article) refutes all of this. However, in my opinion what perhaps most distorts the situation of circus in Lithuania today is the long-standing influence of the Soviet school of circus and the non-existence of the circus as an artistic genre rather than just an entertainment. If we go back to my friends’ question about the bears, there is one rather interesting side note concerning circus bears that is tied to our region – in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the only ‘Bear Academy’ in Europe, where bears were trained for European circuses, operated in the city of Smorgon (today located in Belarus).

As someone from a country where the circus is barely a part of the culture (except for the New Circus Weekend, an initiative which the Arts Printing House has organised for the last eight years), I was doubly fascinated to come face-to-face with and experience circus in a country where it is a very clear and solid part of culture – in terms of the number of creators and audiences, as well as in the financial and

# Šiuolaikinis Cirkas ir Prancūzija

(I d.)

AGNE BILIUNAITE

„Na, tai kaip tavo klounai ir meškos?“ klausia draugai man grįžus iš Prancūzijos, Auch miesto, kur spalio 18-27d. vyko aktualaus cirko festivalis „Circa“. Greičiausiai nė vienas iš jų gerai nesuprato kur ir ko važiuoju. Tuo labiau – kaip kultūros žurnalistė. Juk cirkas mūsų (ir lietuviškos wikipedia’os) supratimu - tai visuma istoriškai susiklosčiusių cirko numerių, kuriuos vienija panaši, atpažįstama ir todėl daug kam nuobodi triukų atlikimo technika, daugiausiai išreiškiama per akrobatiką, ekvilibristiką, gyvūnų dresūrą, gimnastiką, magiją, klounadą, voltižiravimą ir žongliravimą. Meluočiau, jeigu teigčiau, kad vadinamasis aktualus, šiuolaikinis cirkas (apie kurį ketinu kalbėti šiame straipsnyje) visą tai paneigia. Tačiau labiausiai, mano galva, šiandieninę cirko situaciją Lietuvoje iškreipia ilgametė sovietinio cirko mokyklos įtaka ir cirko kaip meno – ne tik pramogos – žanro neegzistavimas. Ir tos meškos draugų klausime greičiausiai yra tolimas atgarsis gana įdomaus fakto, jog Smurgainyse (dabartinės Baltarusijos teritorijoje) jau XIXa. veikė vienintelė Europoje „Meškų akademija“, kurioje buvo dresuojami lokiai Europos cirkams.

Kaip žmogui iš šalies, kurioje cirkas beveik iš vis nėra kultūros dalimi (išskyrus Menų spaustuvės iniciatyvą aštuntus metus rengti „Naujojo cirko savaitgalį“), man buvo dvigubai smalsiau atsidurti ir išgyventi cirką šalyje, kur jis yra labai akivaizdi ir solidi kultūros dalis – ir kūrėjų, ir žiūrovų, ir finansų, ir idėjų prasme. Tokią unikalią progą – savaitę mirkti cirko sultyse – gavau europinio projekto „Unpack the Arts“ dėka. Per dvejus metus dešimtyje šiuolaikinio cirko festivalių aštuoniose šalyse yra organizuojamos rezidencijos kultūros žurnalistams, siekiant paspartinti patirties, idėjų, žinių apytaką, plėsti kritinį šiuolaikinio cirko meno diskursą ir suaktyvinti jo sklaidą Europos kontekste.

intellectual senses. I received this unique chance to spend a week swimming in the juices of the circus thanks to the European project Unpack the Arts. This programme organised residencies for cultural journalists at ten contemporary circus festivals in eight countries over the course of two years, with the aim of speeding up the circulation of experience, ideas and knowledge and of broadening the critical discourse on contemporary circus art and popularising it in the European context.

Thus I flew to France on an overcast October evening to the town of Auch, located close to Toulouse and protected by a medieval spirit. In the morning, the sun warmed me so much that I had to discard the top two layers of my clothing and regretted the fact that I came wearing knee-high autumn boots. During a self-made tour through the centre I found a sculpture of d'Artagnan, a grand cathedral standing on a road of the Santiago pilgrims, and a wide selection of duck pâté. It was extremely strange to think that one of the most famous circus festivals – which dictates the fashion in the circus world – takes place somewhere in the fields of Gascony. However, turning around another corner, suddenly an uncountable flow of circus enthusiasts, colourful children, jugglers on stilts, drummers and mimes flowed right past me like a wall for a good fifteen minutes. It was a parade of French circus schools. The French Federation of Circus Schools (FFEC) joins together around 130 professional circus schools, with three of them circus arts schools of higher education, with 27,000 teachers having licenses. It's no wonder that this kind of systemic preparation gradually turns into 250 circus festivals and 350 professional circus troupes. Thus the first thing I experienced, and physically at that, was that the circus is a phenomenon in France that is youthfully vibrant, has broad appeal and is professional.

But why Auch, a city with barely 23,000 inhabitants? In an interview with Marc Fouillard, the long-standing director of CIRCa, I found out that in 1988 the city's mayor and city council were looking for a way to shake up a city that was

Taigi, apsiniaukusį spalio vakarą išskridau į Prancūziją, į netoliese Tulūzos įsikūrusį viduramžių dvasią išsaugojusį Auch miestelį. Iš ryto saulė šildė taip, kad teko viešbutyje palikti du viršutinius sluoksnius rūbų ir gerokai pasigailėti, kad atvykau avėdama ilgaauliais rudeniniais batais. Per trumpą saviveiklinę ekskursiją senamiestyje aptikau d'Artanano skulptūrą, ant Santjago pilgrimų kelio stovinčią galingą katedrą ir plačią ančių kepenėlių pašteto pasiūlą. Buvo smarkiai keista kodėl, neva, vienas garsiausių, madas cirko pasaulyje diktuojančių festivalių vyksta kažkur Gaskonijos laukuose. Tačiau pasukus dar už vieno kampo staiga mane prie sienos geroms penkiolikai minučių priplojo nesuskaičiuojamas srautas cirko entuziastų, ryškiaspalvių vaikų, žonglierių ant kojūky, būgnininkų, mimų. Vyko Prancūzijos cirko mokyklų paradas. Prancūzijos cirko mokyklų federacija (FFEC) vienija apie 130 profesionalių cirko mokyklų, iš jų 3 – aukštąsias cirko meno mokyklas, 27 000 licenciją turinčių mokytojų. Nekeista, kad šitoks sistemingas parengimas ilgainiui virsta 250 cirko festivalių, 350 profesionalių cirko trupių. Tad pirmas dalykas, kurį patyriau – ir gana fiziškai – kad cirkas Prancūzijoje yra jaunas, masinis ir profesionalus reiškinys.

Bet visgi – kodėl vos 23 000 gyventojų turiniame Auch? Iš interviu su festivalio „Circa“ ilgamečiu direktoriumi Marc Fouillard sužinojau, kad tolimais 1988m. meras ir valdyba ieškojo sprendimo kaip pažadinti gilioje ekonominėje krizėje merdintį miestelį. Tuometinis meras kasmet kviesdavosi karo laikų bendražygį iš Zavata cirko šeimos, kad keletui mėnesių įsikurtų Auch ir rodytų cirko spektaklius. Be to, prieš 40 metų čia gyveno kunigas, kuris buvo įkūręs cirko mokyklą, kad laisvalaikio vietos vaikai neužiimintų niekais. Atsirėmę į šiuos du faktus miesto vyrai nusprendė per lapkričio atostogas sukviesti visų Prancūzijos cirko mokyklų moksleivius, kad šie galėtų pasirodyti vieni kitiems, rengti konkursus ir t.t. Dešimt metų festivalį organizavo savanoriai, o 1998m. jis jau buvo pripažintas profesionaliu ir gavo valstybės paramą. 2000m. valstybė paprašė, kad greta festivalio būtų sukurta ir ištisus metus trunkanti kultūrinė

lounging in the depths of a deep economic crisis. The mayor of the city each year would invite his wartime soldier buddy from the Zavatta circus family to come and live in Auch for a few months and put on circus shows. What's more, a priest who had lived there 40 years prior had set up a circus school so the local children would have something to do in their free time and not get into trouble. Based on these two facts, the city council decided during the November holidays to invite all the students of France's circus schools so they could put on shows for one another, organise competitions and the like. Volunteers organised the festival for ten years, and in 1998 it was already recognised as a professional festival and received state support. In 2000 the state asked for a cultural programme lasting an entire year to be created alongside the festival so that Auch would remain a year-round destination. An association was founded for fostering contemporary circus arts on a nationwide scale. Today those artists that started their circus career as children are coming back to perform at the festival – part of a history spanning 26 years and counting.

It took ten years (until 2006) before an international competition for an architectural project was organised (63 agencies applied), and thanks to the joint work of architects and the festival's team, a permanent circus tent was put down in a field near the River Gers – a structure that organisers of other European festivals come and see and salivate over. The enthusiastic vice-director of the festival tells me about how their new architectural work uses rainwater and sunlight in an innovative fashion, how the former military foundation here was used in a smart way, and how choosing a minimalist naturalistic interior with timber and the like all fit into the budget (they were able to manage with 4.8 million Euros, whereas building a new building would have cost 8 million Euros). It reminded me of a visit to the Gothenburg Opera in Sweden, a building which was also constructed with the oversight of the producers and technical directors – those who knew best what each step of the building needed to be for it to serve artists, and those who had the understanding to avoid situations where the artists would have to adapt

programa, kad Auch liktų traukos centru apskritus metus. Įkurta asociacija rūpinasi šiuolaikinio cirko sklaida visos Prancūzijos mastu. Šiandien į festivalį, kuris skaičiuoja 26 metų istoriją, jau grįžta pasirodyti tie menininkai, kurie čia pradėjo savo kaip cirko menininko kelią būdami vaikais.

Užtruko dešimt metų, kol 2006m. buvo surengtas tarptautinis architektūrinio projekto konkursas (aplikavo net 63 agentūros) ir pievėjo prie Gers upės architektų ir festivalio komandos bendro darbo dėka išdygo stacionari cirko „palapinė“, statinys, kurio pasižiūrėti ir seilės pavarvinti suvažiuoja kitų Europos festivalių organizatoriai. Entuziastingas festivalio direktorius pavaduotojas pasakojo apie tai, kaip jų naujasis architektūrinis kūrinys išmaniai „panaudoja“ lietaus vandenį, saulės šviesą, kaip protingai išnaudoti anksčiau čia buvusių kareivinių pamatai, kaip sutilpta į biudžetą (išsiteko su 4,8 mln. eurų, kai tuo tarpu naujo pastato statyba būtų atsiėjusi 8 mln. eurų) renkantis minimalistinį natūralistinį interjerą, medieną ir t.t. Tai man priminė apsilankymą Geteborgo operos teatre Švedijoje, kurį irgi statė prodiuseriai, techniniai direktoriai, tie, kurie geriausiai žinojo kokia turi būti kiekviena pastato pėda, kad jis tarnautų menininkams, o ne menininkai derintųsi prie netobulos akustikos, nenumatytų dekoracijoms erdvių, nepakankamų technologinių galimybių ar tiesiog kišeninių grimerinių. Panaši istorija ir vilnietiškosios Menų spaustuvės. Jaučiu, kad būtent taip – iš dešimtmečiais brandintos idėjos, iš aiškiai ir detalai suvokiamo poreikio, iš vidinės iniciatyvos išaugę reiškiniai ir pastatai yra iš tiesų gyvi ir energetiškai pritraukia žiūrovus.

Pernai „Circa“ festivalyje į 48 spektaklius buvo parduota 26 000 bilietų. Visą festivalį kuruoja dvidešimt nuolatinių darbuotojų ir du šimtai savanorių. Miestelyje apsilanko apie 350 cirko studentų, apie 300 profesionalų. Turizmo puslapyje suskaičiavau net dešimt viešbučių, iš kurių penki 3 žvaigždučių ir vienas 4 žvaigždučių. Visas senamiestis sausakimšas barų, kavinių ir delikatesų krautuvėlių. Vadinasi, ekonominė situacija šiandien yra smarkiai

to imperfect acoustics, the unforeseen décor of the spaces, the lack of technological possibilities, or simply small make-up rooms. It's a similar story with Vilnius' Arts Printing House. I feel that it is through this approach – where an idea has been maturing for decades, where plans emerge from a need understood clearly and in detail, and where buildings and phenomena grow out of an inner initiative – that structures become truly alive and energetically draw an audience.

There were 26,000 tickets sold for the 48 shows at CIRCa last year. There are twenty regular employees and 200 volunteers that oversee the whole festival. The city is visited by about 350 circus students and about 300 professional circus performers. I counted ten hotels on the tourism website, of which five are three-star hotels and one is a four-star hotel. The entire Old Town is full of bars, cafes and delicatessens. In other words, the economic situation today has changed dramatically and the circus has undoubtedly contributed to that. Of course, the road is longer, more difficult, and there is nothing guaranteed on it, but culture is a proven way to make an impact on the economy. While migrating from one circus tent to another (this year there were a total of eight tents that were set up in Auch) my conversations with journalists from Latvia, Croatia and Slovenia became sad when we talked about the short-sightedness of our politicians and the lack of professionals dealing with cultural policy. Unpack the Arts coordinator Yohann Floch tried to soothe us by reminding us of the fact that the French Ministry of Culture has been raising the country and its cultural life to another level for 60 years, so it is not fair to make comparisons. However, comparisons are always made in each step with the hope that similar processes can occur in Lithuania. I have in mind not only in Vilnius, the capital, but in Ukmergėje, Panevėžyje, Utena and other cities and towns in the country.

Having gotten through the first wave of statistics, the festival history and the French context, I was ready to dive deeper and try to grasp what contemporary circus is exactly, which, as you already have understood, should not be a bear on ice, or a magician that saws a woman in a box in half, or a somewhat tipsy clown making jokes in

pasitaisiusi ir cirkas prie to neabejotinai prisidėjo. Žinoma, toks kelias yra ilgesnis, sunkesnis, jame niekas nėra garantuota, bet kultūra yra įrodytas būdas įtakoti ekonomiką. Bemigrudami nuo vienos cirko palapinės prie kitos (šiemet jų visame Auch mieste pastatyta aštuonios) drauge su kolegomis žurnalistais iš Latvijos, Kroatijos, Slovėnijos liūdnei apkalbėjome savųjų politikų netolerantiškumą ir kultūros politikos profesionalų trūkumą. Rezidencijos kuratorius Yohann Floch mėgino mus guosti primindamas, kad jau vien pats faktas, kad kultūros ministerija Prancūzijoje gyvuoja 60 metų šią šalį ir jos kultūrinį gyvenimą pakelia į kitą lygmenį, tad nereikėtų lygintis. Visgi lyginimasis vyko nuolat, kiekviename žingsnyje ir viltis, kad panašūs procesai gali vykti ir Lietuvoje, turiu galvoje – ne tik sostinėje, bet ir Ukmergėje, Panevėžyje, Utenoje ir pan. miestuose, neapleido.

Ištvėrus pirmąją Prancūzijos konteksto, festivalio istorijos ir statistikos bangą jau buvau pasirengusi nerti giliau ir bandyti perprasti kas gi yra tas šiuolaikinis cirkas, kuris, kaip jau supratot, neturėtų būti nei meška ant ledo, nei iliuzionistas, pjaustantis dėžėje moterį, nei rusiškai šmaikštaujantis kauštelėjęs klounas. Savaitė vakarais žiūrėdavome spektaklius, o rytais diskutuodavome su jų kūrėjais. Negaliu nepaminėti šio fakto, nes tai buvo kaip tik tai, ko reikia, kad žurnalistai suprastų menininkus, gilintųsi į jų kūrybą, diskutuotų su jais ir, galiausiai, rašytų apie juos. Lenkiu galvą ne tik prieš festivalio ir projekto organizatorius, bet ir pačius menininkus, kurie sugebėjo pažiūrėti į tai labai rimtai.

Visuomenėje vis dar dominuoja nuomonė, kad cirkas – tai nuolatinis kartojimas, kūniškumas ir jokios koncepcijos. Festivalio direktoriaus M. Fouilland nuomone cirko esmė – kūno galimybių išplėtimas, o šiuolaikinio cirko esmė – cirko kaip meno formos galimybių išplėtimas. Todėl būtent šiuolaikiniame cirke dabar vyksta labai gilūs intelektualiniai procesai. Europos profesionalių cirko mokyklų federacijos (FEDEC) prezidentas Tim Roberts pasakojo, kad šiuo metu pasaulyje veikia net 13 aukštojo mokslo programų, ruošiančių cirko meno kūrėjus. Tuo

Russian. For one week we watched shows in the evening, and in the morning we would discuss them with their creators. I cannot help but mention this, because that was precisely the thing that was needed so the journalists could understand the artists, go deeper into their work, have discussions with them, and, finally, write about them. I take my hat off not only to the organisers of the festival and the project, but to the artists themselves, who approached this very seriously.

In society, there is still a dominant opinion that the circus is a merely a repetition – a physical act with no conceptual basis. In the opinion of festival director M. Fouilland, the essence of the circus is the expanding of the possibilities of the body, while the essence of contemporary circus performance is the circus as the expansion of the possibilities of the artform. This is why there are very deep intellectual processes occurring in contemporary circus arts. Tim Roberts, who is the president of the European Federation of Professional Circus Schools (FEDEC), says that currently around the world there are a total of thirteen programmes of higher education that prepare circus performers. Up until the 1960s, the tradition of circus performance was alive only among circus families, and the way they handed down knowledge was akin to the passing down of secrets, which is why it was carefully guarded and taught only through a system of inheritance. This greatly limited the development of circus performance as an artform; attention was paid mostly to the size of the tent and the marketing of its shows. Thus in the 1960s, when a total deterioration of the circus was felt and the new generation of circus families didn't want to take over the family business, street artists became interested in the techniques of the circus arts and asked to be taught the tricks of the trade. Thanks to the goodness of a few circus families, the circus was demystified, and an opportunity to learn circus skills arose for those who were not born in a wagon of clowns or acrobats. They began establishing circus schools. Though today it seems that they always existed, one of the oldest circus schools, the Montreal circus school, is only 33 years old. According to Roberts, the biggest problem that contemporary circus faces today is

tarpu iki 7 dešimtmečio cirko tradicija buvo gyva tik cirko šeimų tarpe, žinių perdavimas buvo prilyginamas paslapčių perdavimui, todėl kruopščiai saugomas, skleidžiamas tik paveldėjimo būdu. Tai smarkiai riboja cirko kaip meno formos tobulėjimą. Daugiausiai dėmesio buvo skiriama palapinės dydžiui ir marketingui. Ir štai 7 dešimtmetyje, kai buvo jaučiama visuotinė cirko degradacija ir jaunoji cirko šeimų karta nebenorėjo perimti tėvų verslo, gatvės menininkai pradėjo domėtis cirko technikomis ir prašytis pamokomi atlikimo gudrybių. Dėka keleto cirko šeimų geranoriškumo cirkas buvo demistifikuotas, atsirado galimybė jo išmokyti ir tiems, kas nebuvo gimę klounų ar akrobatų vagonėliuose. Pradėtos steigti cirko mokyklos ir nors šiandien atrodo, kad jos egzistavo visada, seniausia Europoje Monrealio cirko mokykla buvo įkurta vos prieš 33m. Pasak T. Roberts, didžiausia problema, su kuria susiduria šiuolaikinis cirkas, vis dar yra mitai. Juos reikia nuolat dekonstruoti ir atskleisti tiesą. Nors asocijuojamas su nomadišku, romantišku gyvenimo būdu, tradicinis cirkas dažnai tebuvo šou verslo forma. Net ir Sovietų sąjungoje, pasak T. Roberts, cirko akrobatai iš tiesų buvo kareiviai, parengti tapti gimnastais, dalyvauti olimpinėse žaidynėse ir laimėti auksą. Kadangi auksas – tik vienas, likusiems tekdavo persikvalifikuoti ir įsikinkyti į masinės propagandos mašiną, dirbti cirko akrobatais ir būti paklausia eksporto preke į Vakarų. Žlugus Sovietų sąjungai, žlugo ir gerai dirbęs cirko eksportas. Dabar rusai kreipiasi į FEDEC klausdami kaip jiems atgaivinti cirką, nes jų atlikėjai ir yra tik atlikėjai – jie moka atlikti tai, ko juos kažkada išmokė. Pasak T. Roberts, Rusijoje vis dar sunkiai prigyja mintis, kad meno forma yra gyva tiek, kiek laisvas ją kuriantis menininkas. Istorija parodė, kad cirkas yra gyvas, kai yra veikiamas kitų žanrų, kai vyksta nuolatinis mokymasis, idėjų ir išraiškos formų apykaita. Būtent nesidalinimas, izoliacija, mistifikacija ir tapo tradicinio cirko degradavimo priežastimi.

Man patiko viena mintis, kuri pasufleruoja kaip atskirti tradicinį ir šiuolaikinį cirką: svarbiausia, kad technika, meistrystė netaptų vienintele priežastimi kodėl cirko artistas lipa ant scenos.

the myths surrounding it. One has to constantly deconstruct them and reveal the truth. Though the circus is associated with a nomadic, romantic way of life, the traditional circus was often just a form of show-business. Even in the Soviet Union, according to Roberts, circus acrobats were actually soldiers that were trained as gymnasts to participate in the Olympics and win gold. As there is only one gold medal, those who were less successful had to change their focus and hook themselves up to the mass propaganda machine, work as circus acrobats, and be an obedient export product for the West. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the well-oiled circus export machine collapsed as well. Now the Russians are contacting FEDEC and asking how to revive their circus, because their performers are just performers – they only know how to perform what they were taught back then. According to Roberts, in Russia it is hard for the idea to catch on that an artform is only as alive as the artist is free to create it. History has shown that the circus is alive when other genres influence it, when constant learning takes place, when there is an exchange of ideas and forms of expression. It is precisely the lack of sharing, the isolation and mystification, that became the reason for the deterioration of traditional circus performance.

I liked one idea, which helps to make a distinction between traditional and contemporary circus performance: in the contemporary art the most important thing is that the technique and its mastery should not be the only reason why a circus artist goes onstage. It is precisely the search for a concept, the raising of existential questions, the unexpected use of everyday objects, or an original relationship with the music and costumes that are the traits of contemporary circus performance. Scandinavians bring natural material to the contemporary circus like timber and things from nature, while the French contributed modern dance. The Germans brought cabaret, while the Brits brought experimental theatre. There is also a hierarchy that, like in our world, exists in the circus. That which is closest to the earth (animal handling) is considered to be the lowest in a certain sense – the demon-like level of the circus – whereas

Būtent koncepcijos paieška, egzistencinių klausimų kėlimas, kasdienių objektų netikėtas panaudojimas, originalus santykis su muzika, kostiumu yra šiuolaikinio cirko bruožai. Skandinavai į šiuolaikinį cirką atnešė natūralias medžiagas – medieną, gamtos objektus, prancūzai – šiuolaikinį šokį, vokiečiai – kabaretą, britai – eksperimentinį teatrą. Cirke, kaip ir apskritai pasaulyje, irgi egzistuoja hierarchija. Tai, kas arčiausiai žemės (gyvūnų dresavimas) yra laikomas žemiausiu, tam tikra prasme demoniškuoju cirko lygmeniu, o kuo ilgiau artistas neliečia žemės, tuo jis aukščiau pakyla cirko hierarchijoje, taigi, oro akrobatų yra aukščiausias, dieviškasis cirko lygmuo. Cirko atlikėjus ir kūrėjus pradėjus ruošti profesionaliai mokykloms ekonomiškai labai neapsimokėjo laikyti žirgų (jojimo akrobatams), liūtų (dresuotojams) ar įsirengti milžiniškas erdves oro akrobatams. Dėl tokių pragmatiškų priešasčių šiuolaikiniame cirke šie ekstremumai, demoniškas ir dieviškas lygmenys yra beveik nunykę. Užtat išplėtotas žmogiškasis lygmuo – žongliravimas, trapecijos, partneringas ir kt. Sakoma, jeigu nori padiskutuoti apie cirką idėjiškai – pasikalbėk su žonglieriumi. Būtent jie yra didžiausi šiuolaikinio cirko ideologai, filosofai ir konceptualistai. Dauguma kalbintų trupių meno vadovų t.p. yra žonglieriai. Kaip dar vieną to įrodymą prisimčiau šiųmetinius „Naujojo cirko savaitgalio“ Vilniuje svečius – trupę iš Britanijos „Gandini Juggling“ ir jų neįtikėtinai konceptualų spektaklį, kurį įtakojo Pinos Bausch kūryba, kuriame nevyko nieko, išskyrus žongliravimą, bet tuo buvo papasakota visa žmonių santykių drama. To įkvėpta sugebėjau prancūziškai išsiaiškinti kaip nukakti į cirko reikmenų krautuvėlę ir į Lietuvą grįžau su keturiais profesionaliais žongliravimo kamuoliukais. Kad būčiau arčiau cirko filosofijos. Geriau pagalvojus viskas, kas cirke vyksta tiesiogine prasme, mūsų kalboje vartojama kaip egzistencinės metaforos: atlikti tai, ką turi atlikti ir nemirti; žongliruoti, balansuoti virš žemės, taisyti liūtą už ūsų, juoktis pro ašaras ir t.t. Būtent į šias – egzistencines ir filosofines – cirko šaknis ir atsirėmė šiuolaikiniai cirko menininkai, ieškodami naujos aktualios estetikos kalbėti apie amžinus aktualius klausimus.



the longer an artist doesn't touch the ground the higher he goes in the circus hierarchy, such that aerial acrobats are at the highest, god-like circus level. For schools that start training professional circus performers and artists, it does not really pay economically to keep horses (for riding acrobats) or lions (for animal handlers), nor to have a huge area for aerial acrobats. It is because of these pragmatic reasons that these extremes, the demonic and godly levels, have almost disappeared in contemporary circus. However, the human level has been expanded, including juggling, trapeze artistry, and partner acrobatics. It is said that if you want to talk about the concept of the circus, you should talk with a juggler, as they are the biggest ideologues, philosophers and conceptualists of the modern-day circus. Most of the artistic directors of the companies that we talked to are jugglers. I remember yet another piece of evidence from this year's New Circus Weekend – a guest troupe from the UK called Gandini Juggling and their unbelievably conceptual show *Smashed*, heavily influenced by the work of Pina Bausch, where there was nothing going on except for juggling yet an entire drama of human relationships was expressed. With this inspiration, I was able to find out how get to a circus equipment shop in France, and I returned to Lithuania with four professional juggling balls (so I could be closer to the philosophy of the circus). When I paused to give thought to everything that happens in the circus in the true sense of the word, I realised we use a number of existential metaphors in our language: to juggle something, to balance something, to laugh through the tears, etcetera. It is precisely these existential and philosophical roots of the circus that contemporary circus artists lean on, looking for a new relevant aesthetic to discuss eternally relevant questions.

The street artists and hippies in the aforementioned 1960s turned away from the psychosis of consumer society and television show formats, and looked for a means of expression with which they could criticise the political and social situation and be influential in talking about important things. The nomadic

Minėtame 7 dešimtmetyje gatvės menininkai, hipiai nusisuko nuo visuotinės vartojimo psichožės, nuo televizinių šou formatų ir ieškojo išraiškos, kuria būtų galima kritikuoti esamą politinę, socialinę situaciją, paveikiai kalbėti apie svarbius dalykus. Juos sužavėjo cirko nomadiškumas, utopiškumas. Cirko elementai imami jungti su performanso, hepeningo žanrais, priešingai įprastai tradicinio cirko logikai pramoginio šou, sudaryto iš atskirų numerių, logiką keičia teatrui būdingas naratyvas, kuriami personažai, istorijos, panaudojami kasdieniai objektai. Ieškoma naujo santykio su muzika, kuri iki tol labiausiai išnaudota triukų atlikimo metu sukurti įtampą ir „vau!“ efektą. Šį dešimtmetį susiformuoja estetika, būdinga vadinamajam naujamam cirkui.

8 dešimtmetyje, suklestėjus profesionalioms mokykloms, į cirką plūsteli naujos idėjos. Suklesti monopasirodymai. Jie konceptualėja, jaučiama stipri postdraminio teatro, šiuolaikinio šokio įtaka. Šis dešimtmetis – vadinamojo šiuolaikinio cirko formavimosi laikas. Gana aiški paralelė galėtų būti suvesta su šokio istorija bei modernaus ir šiuolaikinio šokio atskyrimu. Interviu metu garsi prancūzų kultūros žurnalistė Gwenola David kalbėjo apie šiuolaikinių scenos menų kontekstą. Nors ji į cirką į atėjo š šokio kritikos, jaučia poreikį nuolat stebėti kas vyksta ir šokyje, ir cirke, ir teatre, nes šios meno kryptys tiesiogiai ir nuolat įtakoja viena kitą. Jos nuomone cirkas – tai ženklų sistema ir virtuoziškas, kuriama atmosfera ir vidinė istorija. Apskritai, meno, taigi ir cirko, tikslas turėtų būti ne nuolatinis klišių, o klausimų pateikimas. O kadangi cirke, priešingai negu sporte, tobulas modelis neegzistuoja, visada išlieka laisvė laužyti jau pasiektas tobulumo ribas ir ieškoti naujų būdų, naujų priemonių tuos klausimus uždavinėti ir versti publiką vėl ir vėl iš naujo kvestionuoti savo egzistenciją. Kalbėdama apie matmenis, dimensijas, kritikė gražiai išskyrė, kad teatre įdarbinama 1 dimensija (tekstas), šokyje – 2 dimensijos (judesys, horizontalė), cirke – 3 dimensijos (virtuoziškas, vertikalė).

Šiandien šiuolaikinis cirkas turi daugybę srovių ir krypčių. Vieni mėgina kurti multidisciplininius

and utopian nature of the circus fascinated them. Circus elements were taken and combined with performance art and happenings, and – going in the opposite direction to the regular tradition of a circus as an entertainment spectacle, made of separate parts – replaced the old model with the narrative character of theatre, where characters and stories were created and everyday objects were used. They looked for a new relationship with music, which up until that time was mostly used during the performance of tricks in order to create tension and a wow effect. This decade developed an aesthetic that is characteristic of what is known as ‘new circus’.

In the 1970s, with the success of professional schools, new ideas flooded into the circus. Solo performances became popular. They gained new concepts, and you could feel the strong influence of post-dramatic theatre and modern dance. This decade is the period when what can be called the contemporary circus started to form. A rather clear parallel can be drawn with the history of dance and the difference between modern and contemporary dance. During an interview, famous French culture journalist Gwénola David spoke about the context of the contemporary stage arts. Though she came to the circus from dance criticism, she feels the need to constantly observe what is happening in dance, circus and theatre, because these artforms are directly and constantly influencing one another. In her opinion, the circus is a system of signs, a virtuosity that is created with atmosphere and an inner story. On the whole, the goal of art, whether it be circus or some other form, should be the constant asking of questions, and not the production of clichés. And since in the circus, in the opposite way to sport, there is no perfect model, there is always a freedom to break the limits of perfection that have already been reached, and to look for new ways and new tools to make the audience question their existence over and over again. In speaking about measurements, dimensions, she made a beautiful distinction that the theatre uses one dimension (the text), dance uses two dimensions (movement and the

pasirodymus, naudoti cirko elementus tik kaip vieną iš daugelio meno sričių greta poezijos, šokio, video, muzikos. Čia svarbiausia tampa idėja, konceptualumas, daug mažiau – techniniai įgūdžiai. Priartėjama prie performanso, teatro. Kiti atmeta kostiumus, teatrines šviesas, personažus ir istorijas ir mėgina eiti į pačias cirko šaknis, siekia išgryninti pačią cirko esmę teigdami, kad akrobatika ar žongliravimas jau savaime savyje turi ir istoriją, ir koncepciją, ir personažą. Jie iš esmės tyrinėja pusiausvyrą, fiziškumą, partnerystę, žemės trauką. Čia labai daug technikos, ši srovė neretai priartėja prie šiuolaikinio šokio. Dar kiti propaguoja urbanistinį cirką, siekia gražinti cirką atgal į gatvę, atmesti konceptualumą, rodyti daugiau akrobatikos, panaudoti R&B hiphopo muziką, kasdienišką rūbą, grupinę kūrybą, pramogiškumą. Čia jėga, rizika ir pavojus rodomi tiesiogiai, nenupuodruojami. Siekiama šokiruoti, sužavėti publiką, priartėjama prie šou pasirodymo.

## 6 Cirko Palapinės Festivalyje „CIRCa“

(II d.)

Norint geriau perprasti kokios idėjos sukasi šiuolaikinio cirko menininkų galvose, puikiai tinka atviri rytiniai interviu kamerinėje aplinkoje prie kavos. Šnekėjomės su būriu labai skirtingų ir vienas už kitą įdomesnių personažų ir kiekvienas po gabalėlį klijavo savo unikalią patirtį ir asmeninį santykį, iš ko galiausiai susidarė gana ryški šiuolaikinio cirko peizažo mozaika.

Lyg iš nebyliojo kino atėjęs pusamžis vokietis **Nikolaus** apie cirką jaunystėje nė nesvajoto. Dirbo ekologiškame brolio ūkyje, tarnavo armijoje, studijavo filosofiją, rašė poeziją. Kol per žongliravimą įsitraukė į cirko pasaulį. „Dabar esu cirko apžavėtas ir tuo pat metu sutraumuotas“ sako menininkas. Spektaklį „Tout est bien!“ jis kūrė drauge su trupe **Pré-O-Coupé**– kiekvienas įnešė savo dalį ir visuma gavosi didesnė už atskirų idėjų sumą. Pasirinkę

UNPACK  
THE  
ARTS

horizontal), while circus uses three dimensions (virtuosity in playing with concepts as well as in moving body horizontally and vertically).

Today contemporary circus has many currents and categories. Some try to create multidisciplinary performances and use circus elements only as one of many fields of art alongside poetry, dance, video art and music. Here the most important thing becomes the idea, the concept, while the technical skills are much less critical. Such works approach performance art and theatre. Others throw out the costumes, theatrical lighting, characters and stories and try to go to the very roots of circus – to get to its very essence – stating that acrobatics or juggling in and of itself has a story, and a concept, and a character. Fundamentally, they are researching balance, physicalness, working together, the pull of the earth. Here there is much to do with technique, and this current often approaches contemporary dance. Still others propagate an urban circus, and strive to return the circus back to the street, get rid of conceptualism, show more acrobatics, use R&B and hip-hop music, everyday clothing, group work, and entertainment-like elements. Here it is about strength, risk and the danger of showing it directly without sugar-coating it. They try to shock and blow the public away, approaching a kind of spectacular performance.

## Six Tents at CIRCa Festival

### (Part 2)

If you want to better grasp the kinds of ideas that are in the heads of contemporary circus artists, open interviews – in the morning, in a more relaxed environment, with coffee – are great. We talked with very different groups of people and the next interview was always more interesting than the last, each interviewee bringing a piece of their own unique experience and personal relationship to the circus to create, ultimately, a very vivid mosaic of the landscape of contemporary circus.



Cie La Meute – *La Meute* © Einar Kling

aršiai nusiteikusių ultraliberalių cirko šeimą ir purvo, skurdo, šiukšlių, nestabilumo, trapumo estetiką siekė parodyti cirko priešybę – visuomenę. Kaip surengti šou, jeigu visa cirko technika išparduota, palapinė – ardoma, o dramblys nugaišo – tai šio spektaklio pagrindinis nervas. O taip pat pusiausvyros išlaikymas jos netenkant, grakštumas, kai aplink viskas grubu ir purvina, lyriškumas absoliučioje disharmonijoje, pakilimas griūtyje. Apibūdinti cirkui Nikolaus prisiminė seno klouno išmintį: pavojus-pagarba-meilė. Įrodydamas, jog žonglieriai iš tiesų yra cirko filosofai, dar pacitavo ir Samuel Becket: „Kiek bandžiau, tiek suklydau. Nesvarbu, bandysiu dar ir suklysiu geriau“. Kiekvienas mes per gyvenimą rengiame vieną vienintelį numerį. Nikolaus numeris – visuomenės neigimas. Purvo, fiziškumo

Middle-aged German artist Nikolaus, who looks like he came from the silent film era, didn't even dream of the circus as a kid. He worked on his brother's ecological farm, served in the army, studied philosophy and wrote poetry – until he happened upon juggling and was drawn into the circus world. "Now I am fascinated by the circus and at the same time traumatised," he says. He created the performance *Tout est bien!* with his company Pré-O-Coupé. Each artist contributes their own piece and the whole becomes bigger than the sum of its separate parts. By choosing to represent a passionately ultra-liberal circus family and the aesthetics of mud, poverty, trash, instability and fragility, they attempt to show the opposite of the circus – society. How to organise a show if all the circus equipment has been sold, the tent is destroyed, the elephants die – this is the central nerve of the show. Also the keeping of one's balance if you lose it; elegance, when everything around you is muddy and harsh; lyricism in total disharmony; and the rising tide of disaster. In describing the circus, Nikolaus remembered the wise words of an old clown: danger-respect-love. Proving that the jugglers in fact are the philosophers of the circus, he quoted Samuel Beckett: "As much as I have tried I have failed. It's not important, I will try again and fail better." Each of us during our life prepares one act. Nikolaus' act is the refuting of society. His aesthetic of fullness and physicality speak about footprints, memory. We leave footprints when we move, and we move when we are alive. Everything that doesn't move, that is clean, is not alive. Just like everything that is too ecological is not interesting. "To use as much as energy as possible so I would get what is almost impossible – that is my motto, which in essence goes against economic logic." Being a German, he chose to live and work in France, because the circus is well integrated in the country's cultural landscape. "We, circus people, are very stupid. But all of this intellectual movement of contemporary circus speaks about us in a very serious way. So we try to speak more seriously," quipped Nikolaus. In his opinion, the new circus had become so serious in the 1960s that it lost its audience. In his opinion, the circus should always preserve a dose of naivety and simplicity in it.

estetika kalba apie pėdsakus, atmintį. Mes paliekame pėdsakus tada, kai judame, o judame tada, kai esame gyvi. Visa, kas nejuda, kas švaru, tas yra negyva. Kaip kad viskas, kas per daug ekologiška – yra neįdomu. „Panaudoti kuo daugiau energijos, kad išgaučiau tai, kas beveik neįmanoma – štai mano devizas, kuris iš esmės prieštarauja ekonomikos logikai.“ Būdamas vokietis, jis pasirinko gyventi ir kurti Prancūzijoje, nes jos kultūros peizaže cirkas yra puikiai integruotas. „Mes, cirko žmonės, esame labai kvaili. Bet visas šis intelektualinis šiuolaikinio cirko judėjimas kalba apie mus labai rimtai. Tad ir mes mėginame kalbėti rimčiau.“ Šmaikštavo Nikolaus. Jo nuomone 7 dešimtmetyje naujasis cirkas buvo tiek surimtėjęs, kad prarado publiką. Jo nuomone cirkas turėtų visada išsaugoti savyje dozę naivumo ir paprastumo.

Susitikus su trupės **Le Meute** vaikinais, pokalbis sukosi daugiau apie jaunatvišką energiją ir ribų laužymą. Apibūdinti kolektyvinės kūrybos privalumą buvo prisimintas prancūziškas posakis: „Po vieną mes judame greičiau, bet drauge mes judame ilgiau.“ Jų spektaklio „La Meute“ atspirties tašku tapo išgąstis. Kartu repetavusi mergina taip susitraumavo, kad metė cirką ir niekada nebegalės važinėti dviračiu. Apibūdindami kas jiems yra cirkas, vaikinai vardino riziką, pavojį, prie kurio ilgai pripranti, bet niekada jo nepamiršti. Negalėdami rizikos išvengti jie renkasi su ja žaisti, flirtuoti. Pasiteiravus kurios šio spektaklio vietos jiems buvo baisiausios, atsakymas pralinksmo – pasirodo tai teatrinės ir muzikinės vietos, kur jie nesijaučia tokie stiprūs. Spektaklis vyksta tarsi vaikų persirengimo kambaryje, naudojamos rusiškos-prancūziškos sūpynės, čiuziniai, rankšluosčiai, lentos, kopėčios, dominuoja metalas, medis ir tekstilė – tarsi trys vyriškumo metaforos. Šiame spektaklyje vaikinai siekė sužadinti publikos jausmus, kurie kyla ne galvoje, bet pilvo srityje. Eiti į auditoriją ne per mentalinį, bet labiau per fizinį suvokimą, minties pojūtį. Žaisdami su išgąščiu jie taip pat palietė ir skausmo temą. Žongliuojama su tuo, kas skauda artistams, bet publika to nemato, ir skausmu, kurį mato publika, bet kurio artistas iš tiesų neįaučia.

Meeting up with the young men from the company *La Meute*, the conversation turned more to youthful energy and the breaking of barriers. In describing the benefits of group work, a French saying was mentioned: "We go faster alone, but together we travel further." It was fear that became the starting point for their show *La Meute*. The girl that practiced with them became so traumatised that she left the circus and could never ride a bicycle again. In describing what circus is to them, the young men named risk and danger, which you get used to gradually, but which you never forget. Unable to avoid risk, they choose to play with it, to flirt with it. After asking which parts of the show were the most difficult for them, their answer made me smile – it turned out it was the theatrical and musical parts where they didn't feel so strong. The show takes place in the young men's changing room, using Russian-French swings, skates, towels, boards, ladders, and is dominated by metal, wood and textiles, like three metaphors of masculinity. With this show, they attempted to awaken the audience's feelings that arise not in their head, but in their stomach. To come to the auditorium not with a mental understanding, but rather a physical one. By playing with fear, they also touch upon the theme of pain. They juggle with what is painful for the artists, but which the audience doesn't see, and the pain that the public does see, but which the artist in reality doesn't feel. They employ what they call the "inner eyes and outer ears" in the creative process in the shape of a French comic that helps them to understand whether they are really showing what they want to show. Often the creative process – contemplation and searching for solutions for the show – is more interesting than the performance itself, which is why they feel more like artists than performers.

The company *Akoreacro* is a group of five musicians playing the forte piano, cello, drums, violin, accordion and clarinet alongside five acrobats who show their perfect symbiosis and virtuosity in the show *Klaxon*. The only woman in the show took part in my interview. She said that these artists began their career on the street, so this performance was the first in their

Kūrybiniame procese jiems talkina „išorinės akys ir išorinės ausys“ – prancūzas komikas, kuris padeda suprasti ar jie iš tiesų rodo tai, ką nori parodyti. Dažnai kūrybinis procesas, mąstymas, ieškojimas sprendimų iki spektaklio yra daug įdomesnis, nei pats pasirodymas, todėl jie jaučiasi esą labiau kūrėjais, nei atlikėjais.

Trupė **Akoreacro** – tai 5 muzikantai, grojantys fortepijonu, violončele, būgnais, smuiku, akordeonu, klarnetu, ir 6 akrobatai, kurie spektaklyje „Klaxon“ parodė tobulą simbiozę ir virtuoziskumą. Interviu dalyvavo vienintelė trupės moteris. Ji pasakojo, kad šie menininkai karjerą pradėjo gatvėse, kad šis pasirodymas – pirmasis nuosavoje palapinėje, kuri su visa technine įranga, kėdėmis ir vilkiku jai gabenti atsiėjo 230 000 eurų. Jų kūrybinis procesas t.p. vyksta kolektyviai, labai daug ką stengiamasi sudėlioti dar popieriuje, nusibraižyti energetines spektaklio kreives, tačiau tikrasis rašymas vis tik vyksta ant scenos. Jie taip pat turi konsultantus – dramaturgą, kompozitorių ir akrobatikos mokytoją. Kurdami šį spektaklį norėjo, kad muzika iššauktų akrobatinius judesius, o šie – muziką, pamėginti sutuokti šiuodu žanrus. „Siekiame, kad žiūrovai bent valandai pamirštų viską, kas liko už palapinės sienų ir patikėtų, kad skristi yra lengva.“ Nors nėra lengvas nei gyvenimas, nei tuo labiau cirko realybė. Trupėje keliauja 18 žmonių, kurie stengiasi viską atlikti patys – ir palapinę pastatyti (2 dienos), ir apšvietimą sukabinti, ir vilkikus vairuoti, ir administruoti, ir kostiumus pasisiūti. „Mes pasirinkome nuolat gyventi kelyje. Kartais pasvajoju kaip norėčiau rytais savo terasoje gerti kavą su tuo pačiu žmogumi, bet... Todėl mūsų trupė turi utopinę idėją tapti šeima nebūdami šeima.“ atviravo Claire Aldaya. Akrobatė pradėjo dirbti cirke būdama 17m. Dabar cirko mokyklas jaunimas baigia 27m. Laikai keičiasi. Bet cirkas, kai jį pasirenki, yra visam gyvenimui: iš pradžių treniruojiesi, kad taptum geriausiu, vėliau treniruojiesi, kad nuolat būtum geriausiu, o galiausiai treniruojiesi, kad nebūtum blogesniu. Menininkė prisipažįsta, kad jų siekis – kurti tokius pasirodymus, kurie skatintų publiką mąstyti širdimi.

own tent, and that, with all the technical equipment, chairs and the truck it took to bring it here, this tent cost 230,000 Euros. In their creative process, which is a collective effort, they try to put a lot together on paper, marking the energetic waves of the show; however the real writing still happens only onstage. They also have their own consultants – a dramatist, composer and acrobatics teacher. In creating this show, they wanted the music to summon acrobatic moves, while the moves would do likewise for the music – an attempt to marry the two genres together. “We aim for the audience – for at least one hour – to be able to forget everything that is outside the walls of the tent and believe that it’s easy to fly.” However, life is not easy, not to speak of the reality of the circus. There are eighteen people travelling in the company who try to do everything themselves – including putting up the tent (which takes two days), hanging up the lighting, driving the trucks, taking care of the administrative aspects, and making the costumes. “We chose to always live on the road. Sometimes I dream of how I would like to drink coffee on my own terrace with the same person, but... That is why our troupe has a utopian idea to become a family while not being a family,” said Claire Aldaya. This acrobat began to work in the circus at seventeen. Now students graduate from circus schools at a later age. Times change. But the circus, when you choose it, is for life: at the beginning you train so you won’t be worse than others. She admitted that their goal is to create the kind of shows that would encourage the public to think with their heart.

The company Cirque Aïtal and their tragicomic and very heartfelt show *Pour le meilleur et pour le pire* captured the hearts of all us journalists. Our morning interview turned almost into the second part of the show, revealing the relationship of the two characters that in real life are a couple. Kati Pikkarainen is a dainty blond acrobat from Finland who at sixteen left for a circus school in France. Victor Cathala, a curly-haired French giant, who went to the same school totally by chance, was a professional football player, and later a

Vienareikšmiškai visų mūsų, žurnalistų, širdis užkariavo trupė **Aïtal** ir jų tragikomiškas ir labai nuoširdus spektaklis „*Pour le meilleur et pour le pire*“. Rytinis interviu virto antra spektaklio dalimi, atskleidžiančia dviejų personažų, kurie ir gyvenime yra pora, santykius. Kati Pikkarainen – smulkutė mažutė geltonplaukė akrobatė iš Suomijos, kuri 16m. išvyko į cirko mokyklą Prancūzijoje. Victor Cathala - garbanotas milžinas prancūzas, kuris į tą pačią cirko mokyklą atėjo visiškai atsitiktinai – buvo profesionalus futbolininkas, vėliau – stambus ūkininkas, mokėsi gyvulininkystės, o tada atrado žirgų sportą ir akrobatiką su žirgais. Taip ir susitiko. Jis nekalbėjo angliškai, ji – prancūziškai. O teko kurti porinį akrobatikos numerį, taip užsimezgė be galo stiprus fizinis ryšys. Jų duetas baigė mokyklą laimėdamas svarbų konkursą, atsivėrė durys į tokias trupes kaip „*Cirque du Soleil*“. Visgi pora nusprendė rinktis ne šou, bet tikrąjį cirką. Metus dirbo Šveicarijoje su „*Zimmermann & de Perrot*“. Darbas šioje trupėje jiems pasirodė per mažai cirkas ir per daug teatras. Todėl dabar renkasi dirbti dviese. Kuria tada, kai turi ką pasakyti. Šį spektaklį pastatė 2011m. ir jau parodė 117 kartų. Pagrindinę mintį nesunku atsekti – tai universali istorija apie juos, apie du žmones nuolat kelyje, judančius. Palapinės grindys – plika žemė, kelio dulkės, tai, kas visada mus supa, kas gyvenime suteikia prožiškumo, brutalumo. Į palapinę įvažiuoja ryškiai raudona mažytė mašina ir santykių drama prasideda. Iš pradžių – nesibaigiantis durelių trunkymas kaskart perjungiant vis kitą muziką, iš ko išauga ištisa akrobatų poros istorija, organiškai įtraukianti šokio, teatro, humoro elementus. Pasak Kati Pikkarainen akrobatų pora yra nuolat tarsi jelektrinta. Spektaklis nepaprastai kinematografiškas, pvz. finale apšvietimą kaitaliojant su tamsa kuriama kadruotė padeda auginti įtampą. Sąmoningai žaidžiama su rekvizitu ir kuriamos papildomos metaforos, poetinės aliuzijos. „Kaskart sukūrę spektaklį, mes jaučiame vidinę būtinybę jį pavadinti – kas tai – cirkas, šokis, o gal teatras? Nes mes gerbiame cirko žanrą ir vengiame neatsakingai juo vadinti visko, kas dedasi ant scenos tik todėl, kad patys esame atėję iš cirko mokyklos. Kaskart pasitikriname ar pasirodyme yra

successful farmer who studied animal husbandry, and then found equestrian sports and acrobatics with horses. That is how they met. He didn't speak English, and she didn't speak French. However, they made an acrobatic duet, and in that way created a strong physical bond that knows no bounds. As a duet they graduated from their school by winning an important competition, which opened the doors to such troupes as Cirque du Soleil. However, the couple chose true circus performing, and not spectacle. They worked for a year with Zimmermann & de Perrot in Switzerland. For them it seemed the work with the company had too much theatre and not enough circus, which is why now they have chosen to work as a duo. They work when they have something to say. They started to perform this show in 2011 and have already performed it 117 times. The main idea is not hard to follow – it's a universal story about them, about two people who are always on the road, moving. The floor of the tent is the bare earth, the dust of the road, everything that surrounds us and that gives our life prosody and brutality. A bright small red car drives into the tent and the relationship drama starts. At the beginning it's the unending slamming of doors that changes the music each time; from this grows an entire history of the acrobatic couple which organically includes elements of dance, theatre and humour. According to Kati Pikkarainen, the couple are always electrified. The performance is unusually cinematographic – for example in the finale the light alternates with darkness to create a small scene that helps to raise the tension. They deliberately play with a prop and additional metaphors and poetic allusions are made. "Every time after making a performance, we feel an inner necessity to name it – what it is – circus, dance, or maybe theatre? Because we respect the genre of the circus and avoid irresponsibly naming it everything that is going on onstage; because we ourselves have come from a circus school. Each time we check if there is enough circus in our performance, otherwise we call it theatre or a dance performance," said the artists. They are not crazy about the circus; if the idea of the performance demands a simple theatrical

pakankamai cirko, kitu atveju vadiname tai teatru ar šokio spektakliu." teigia menininkai. Jie nėra pamišę dėl cirko, jeigu spektaklio idėja pareikalautų įprastos teatrui erdvės, jie mielai išsikraustytų iš savo palapinės. Nomadiškas cirko gyvenimas nėra rožinis, greičiau jau rudas. Ypač rudenį ir žiemą, kai aplink šalta, lyja ir reikia keltis 4:00 ryte, kad įjungtum šildymą palapinėje ir nuo stogo nutirpdytum sniegą. Ne pyragai ir šiltuoju metų laiku, štai šią vasarą, kai palapinėje buvo + 40 laipsnių šilumos, Victor prisipažino numetęs 7 kg. „Ir mes neturime savo sodo“ pabaigia jis. Sodo metafora - dirbtinės gėlės, sukaišiotos į smėlį – panaudotos ir šiame spektaklyje.

Tuo tarpu trupės **Rasposo** spektaklis „Morsure“ sukėlė visiškai priešingas emocijas. Po jo mūsų tarpe prigijo priežodis „Bet kodėl tigras?“. Šiame spektaklyje iš tiesų pasirodo tikras gyvas tigras (beje, baltas pudelis t.p.). Tiek prisiklausius apie šiuolaikinio cirko siekį atsiriboti nuo gyvūnų dresūros, buvo netikėta festivalyje išgirsti riaumojant plėšrūną. Į interviu atėjo dabartinė šios trupės vadovė Marie Molliens, kuri, būdama 37-erių, vadovauja trupei, kuriai ilgus metus vadovavo jos mama. Rasposo atveju tradiciškumo esama ir daugiau – tradicijų perdavimas šeimos rate, kartu dirba dvi dviejų šeimų kartos. „Morsure“ yra šios menininkės debiutinis spektaklis. Ji daug dirbo prie medžiagos, siekdama atrasti naują šiuolaikinį šios trupės kūrybinį kelią. Pasirinko cirko teatrą. Naudojo daug elementų iš vaizduojamojo meno (įrėminimas, figūrų komponavimas), italų kino (ypač aluzijas į F. Fellini laikmetį, kostiumus, jo filmus). Spektaklyje didžiulę dalį užima gyvai atliekama muzika, šiek tiek – šokio. Pagrindinė mintis – cirko trupės primadona, diva, pagrindinė moteris ir visa tai, kas ir kaip sukasi aplink ją. Kalbama apie aistros žiaurumą, negailestingai besikandžiojantį gyvenimą, jo paliekamus randus. Naudojamos skirtingos akrobatikos ir ekvilibristikos technikos. Mėginama žaisti su skirtingais laikais, kaip kad tai naudojama kine – dabartis, prisiminimai, fantazijos. Galiausiai visa apskrita palapinės scena aptveriami aukšta tvora, ant kurios užmetamas tinklas ir į vidų pro veidrodį įšoka gyvas tigras. Deja, bet

space they would gladly move out of their tent. The nomadic life of the circus is not tinted with rose-coloured glasses, and it would be more accurate to say it is tinted with a brownish colour. Especially in the fall and winter, when it's cold everywhere, it rains, and you have to get up at 4am so you can turn on the heating in the tent and melt the snow from the roof. In the warm times of the year, it's no piece of cake either. For example, this last summer when it was 40 or more degrees in the tent, Victor admitted that he lost seven kilos. "And we don't have our own garden," he said. The metaphor of the garden – artificial flowers, planted in the ground – is used in this performance.

The performance *Morsure* by the troupe Rasposo gave rise to totally opposite emotions. After the performance, the phrase "But why a tiger?" became popular in our group. A real live tiger did appear in this performance (as well as a white poodle). After having heard so much about the goal of the contemporary circus to distance itself from animal handling, it was surprising to hear this beast roaring at the festival. The current artistic director of the company, Marie Molliens, came to the interview; at 37 she is leading a troupe that was headed for many years by her mother. In the case of Rasposo, there is in fact even more tradition – two generations of two families work together in the company. *Morsure* is the debut performance directed by Molliens. She worked a lot with material with the goal of discovering a new contemporary creative path for this troupe. She chose circus theatre. She used many elements from visual art (framing, composition of figures), Italian cinema (especially allusions to Fellini's period, costumes and films). Live music takes a large part in the performance, along with a little bit of dance. The main idea is that there is a prima donna of a circus troupe, a diva, and everyone and everything circles around her. *Morsure* talks about the brutality of passion, a life that mercilessly gnaws at you, and the scars that it leaves. Various kinds of acrobatic and equilibristic techniques are used. The company attempt to play with different timelines, just as in cinema – the present, memories, and fantasy. Ultimately this round tent stage is fenced in with a tall fence, on which a net is thrown, and a live tiger

gal dėl spektaklio šviežumo, gal dėl kūrėjos nepatirties, bet visos gražios ir įdomios idėjos nuo pat pradžių ėmė strigti, brigzti, sulipdyti dramaturginiai gabalai – atsiklijuoti vienas nuo kito. Kol viską finaline nesėkme vainikavo visiškai apatiškas aplinkai tigras. Nebuvo nei gilios metaforos, nei „vau“ efekto. Tigras šiuo atveju buvo visiškai akivaizdžiai nebūtinus. Juk dažnai mažiau yra daugiau.

Šiuo kredo – mažiau yra daugiau – rėmėsi **Aurelien Bory**, kuris su marokiečių akrobatų trupe **Cie 111** festivalyje pristatė spektaklį „Azimut“. Šiuo atveju pats kūrybinis procesas labiau priminė teatro ar operos spektaklio kūrimą, kur labai ryški vieno režisieriaus ranka. Nors istorijos, medžiaga išplaukė iš pačių atlikėjų. Dirbdamas su Maroko akrobatais menininkas visų pirma siekė atskleisti jų dvasines patirtis, tai, kas jiems skauda, visiškai nuimdamas egzotiką ir atsiribodamas nuo „maroko šou“. Tokiu būdu pavyko sukurti originalų, bet t.p. universalų spektaklį. Jo darbo metodas – idėjų rinkimas, daugybė bandymų, kol galiausiai atmetama viskas, kas šiam konkrečiam spektakliui nebūtina. Režisierius išnaudojo ne tik akrobatų asmenines šeimų istorijas. Tai, kas galėjo tapti spektaklio trūkumais (nėščia akrobatė, susitraumavęs senstantis akrobatas), jis pavertė privalumais. „Aš pasitikiu gyvenimo realybe ir tuo, ką ji man duoda.“ teigia Aurelien Bory, vadinantis save žonglieriumi. Šio spektaklio atspirties tašku tapo skrydis, kuris yra svarbus ne tik akrobatikoje apskritai, bet ir teatre. Juk Italijoje sukūrus pirmąją teatro mašiną, ji buvo panaudota būtent skrydžio efektui kurti. A. Bory spektaklyje labai daug matematikos, fizikos, mechanikos, įrangos. Pagrindinė „Azimut“ dekoracija – visą scenos aukštį (spektaklis rodytas įprastoje teatro scenoje) užimančios grotos. Tarsi ant visatos būtų uždėtas milimetrinis popierius ir sukurtas tinklelis kūnų judėjimui. Pasak kūrėjo, akrobatika išvertus iš graikų kalbos reiškia vaikščiojimą danguje. Pradžioje scenoje aukštyn žemyn juda juodi maišai – tai svoris, balastas, miręs kūnas, pati mirtis, jos krytis, šokis erdvėje. Scenoje t.p. naudojamos juodos draperijos, kurios atgyja „prakalbintos“ elementariomis teatro



jumps inside through a mirror. Unfortunately, but perhaps due to the freshness of the performance, perhaps due to the lack of experience of the artist, the very beautiful and interesting ideas from the very beginning began to get caught up in themselves and become frayed, while the dramaturgical pieces that were stuck together became unglued. Everything was crowned with the finale's failure of a tiger totally apathetic to everything around it. There was neither a deep metaphor nor a wow effect. In this case, the tiger was definitely clearly unnecessary. After all, oftentimes less is more. Aurélien Bory uses this credo of less is more. He is the artistic director of the company Cie 111 and worked with the Moroccan Groupe Acrobatique de Tanger to put on the performance *Azimut* at the festival. In this case, the creative process itself reminds one more of the creation of a theatre or opera performance, where the hand of one director is very clear. However, the stories and material came from the performers themselves. Working with Moroccan acrobats, Bory first of all strove to reveal their spiritual experience, what is painful for them, totally stripping off the exoticism and distancing *Azimut* from a 'Moroccan show'. In this way they were able to create an original but also universal performance. Their working method is to collect ideas and make many attempts to realise them, until in the final stages they throw out everything that is not necessary for this specific performance. The director utilises not the personal histories of the acrobats, and what could be disadvantages for the performance (a pregnant acrobat, an ageing acrobat that has been hurt) he turns into advantages. "I believe in the reality of life and what it gives me," said Aurélien Bory, who calls himself a juggler. The turning point of the performance is a flight, which is important not only in acrobatics in general, but also in theatre. After all, the very first piece of theatre equipment built in Italy was used precisely to create the effect of flight. There is a lot of math and physics and many mechanical objects and pieces of equipment used in Bory's performance. The main decoration of *Azimut* is the bars that take up the entire back wall of the stage (the performance is shown on a regular theatre stage). It's as if graph paper was put on the globe and a grid was created for body movement. According

šviesomis, sukuriant šešėlius, išnaudojant judesį. Apskritai spektaklyje kūrėjas naudoja daug užslėptų aliuzijų ir metaforų. Pvz. ant grotų narpliojamos vilnonės siūlų gijos, pasirodo, siejasi su žodžiu sufizmas, kuris arabiškai reiškia vilną. Be to, vilna puikiai gaudo šviesą ir kuria įspūdingus efektus. „Šviesa man scenoje yra tarsi vizualinė muzika“ sako A.Bory, todėl su šviesų dailininku jis dirba kaip su kompozitoriumi – nuo pat spektaklio idėjos pradžios. Spektaklyje panaudota vos penktadalis idėjų, svarbiausia – sugebėti atmesti kas nebūtina ir neprisirišti. Tik taip gali nueiti toliau ir giliau. Nepamirštama palikti ir pakankamai tuščios erdvės spektakliui kvėpuoti. „Azimut“ – labai filosofiškas, beveik viduramžiškas spektaklis, todėl kūrėjai siekė priartėti prie šiandienos per ryškius kasdienius kostiumus (marškinėlius, džinsus). Spektaklis „Azimut“ – tai akrobatika, perauganti į vizualinį teatrą, savotiškas cirko žanro paribys. „Teatras neegzistuoja. Egzistuoja tik teatrai ir tu turi atrasti savąjį“ Emilij Zola pacitavo cirko filosofas A.Bory.

Sukurti naują cirko pasirodymą visoms kalbintoms trupėms prireikia ne mažiau metų, Aurelien Bory - dvejų. Festivalis „Circa“ į programą atsirenka tuos spektaklius, kurie būna parodyti bent 60 kartų. Pačios trupės skaičiuoja ir iki 200 parodymų. Tad užbaigti šią trumpą ekskursiją į šiuolaikinį cirką ir į „Circa“ festivalį Prancūzijoje, Auch miestelyje, noriu suverdamą draugėn pagrindinius šios gyvybingos meno rūšies principus: atkaklumas ir nuolatinis tobulinimasis veda į tobulumą; nudžiūvusius šakų apsilaužymas leidžia energiją išnaudoti naujų žiedų išskleidimui; suvaldyta rizika ir suvaldytas kūrybiškumas kuria erdvę atradimams; ne klišių rodymas, o klausimų uždavimas yra produktyviausias santykis su publika; izoliacija žudo, dalinimasis – praturtina. Kiekviena meno forma, kad klestėtų, turi apimti penkis pagrindinius elementus: švietimą, kūrybą, produkciją, sklaidą ir dokumentavimą. Tarp šių penkių elementų turi vykti nuolatinė energijos ir idėjų apykaita bei kiekvienos iš šių grandžių santykis su publika. Prancūzijoje šiuolaikinis cirkas turi daugybę mokyklų, yra apie 350 nuolat kuriančių cirko trupių, kurios

to Bory, acrobatics in Greek means to “walk in the heavens”. At the beginning, black bags move up and down onstage – they represent weight, ballast, the dead body, death itself, its downfall, dance in a space. Black curtains are also used on the stage, which begin to speak using the elementary lighting of the theatre, creating shadows and utilising movement. In general, Bory uses many hidden allusions and metaphors in the performance. For example, there are woollen yarn threads wound on the bars which it appears are tied with the word ‘Sufism’, which is derived from the Arabic word for ‘wool’. What’s more, wool catches the light wonderfully and creates wonderful effects. “For me, light is like visual music,” said Bory, which is why he works with a lighting artist, and a composer, from the very beginning of the idea for a performance. *Azimut* barely uses a fifth of the ideas that went into it, but the most important ability is to throw out what is unnecessary and not cling to it. Only by doing this can you go further and deeper. Bory and the acrobats don’t forget to leave enough empty space for the performance to breathe. *Azimut* is a very philosophical, almost medieval performance, which is why the creators of it strove for it to be closer to the present through vivid everyday costumes (t-shirts and jeans). The performance *Azimut* is an acrobatic piece that grew into visual theatre, a unique circus genre that is on the borders of the art. “Theatre doesn’t exist. It is only theatres that exist and you have to find your own,” circus philosopher Bory says, quoting Émile Zola.

For all of the groups we talked to, it takes a number of years to create a new circus performance. For Aurélien Bory, it took two years. CIRCa Festival chooses performances for its programme that have generally been shown at least 60 times. The troupes themselves usually count up to 200 performances. Thus in finishing this short tour of contemporary circus and CIRCa Festival in Auch, France I would like to bring together the main principles of this lively artform: persistence and constant improvement brings you to perfection; the breaking off of dead branches allows one to use the energy for the blossoming of new blossoms; controlled risk and controlled creativity creates a space for discovery;



Akoreacro – *Klaxon* © Niels Benoist

nuolat mėgina cirko ribas, nuolat keliauja aplink šalį (bent 50 trupių turi savo nuosavas palapines, šalyje vyksta apie 250 cirko festivalių) ir į užsienį, apie cirką yra nuolat ir profesionaliai rašoma. Suvokdama šių dviejų šalių – Prancūzijos ir Lietuvos – teritorinius, demografinius, istorinius ir kultūrinius skirtumus vis tiek viliuosi, kad ir pas mus po truputį sustiprės ne tik šiuolaikinis šokis, bet ir šiuolaikinis cirkas. Labai to linkiu.

Projekto „Unpack the Arts“ partneriai – festivaliai Ny Cirkus (Kopenhaga, Danija), CIRCa (Auch, Prancūzija), Festival novog cirkusa (Zagreb, Kroatija), Subcase (Stokholmas, Švedija), Hors Pistes Biennale ir La Piste aux Espoirs Biennale (Brukselis ir Tournai, Belgija), Cirko Festival (Helsinkis, Suomija), Circusstad Festival (Roterdamas, Nyderlandai),

the giving of questions, and not the showing of clichés, is the most productive relationship you can have with the audience; isolation kills, while sharing enriches. In order for each artform to develop, you have to cover five main elements: lighting, creative work, production, dissemination and documentation. Between these five elements, there has to be a constant exchange of energy and ideas as well as a relationship between the audience and each of these things. Contemporary circus has many schools in France, and there are about 350 circus companies who are constantly testing the limits of the circus, and constantly travelling around the country (at least 50 companies have their own tents, and about 250 circus festivals take place in France) as well as abroad. The circus is written about by professionals on a regular basis. In understanding the territorial, demographic, historical and cultural differences of France and Lithuania, I still hope that not only contemporary dance will slowly but surely become stronger, but also the contemporary circus. I truly wish that.

Humorologie, Festival of Emotions (Kortrijk-Marke, Belgija), Edinburgh Festival Fringe (Edinburgas, JK), London International Mime Festival (Londonas, JK).

# “Pour le meilleur et pour le pire”, Always Returning to Each Other

ALAN MISIEWICZ

*Pour le meilleur et pour le pire* by the French-Finnish duo Cirque Aïtal is the kind of performance one enjoys going back to and experiencing anew. The play's underlying charm is, by all means, unquestionable. The acrobatic stunts and the ability of the performers to adjust their bodies to all sorts of incredible positions simply stun. Yet, one can get the impression that this is not the core of the show. What is important is that the play in itself is perfectly constructed and the narrative is strung from the very beginning – from the moment the car lights start to glisten behind the curtain and the car appears on the stage – through to the very end, when the performers disappear from the stage. The show is an ordinary story about ordinary people with whom the audience can easily identify. It talks about two people in love, who do not always agree with each other, who argue a lot, but always return to each other. As the title says, they are together for better or worse. In this way, Aïtal's one-hour show becomes an immense metaphor for life. Actually: neither the escape from life, nor the escape from the return to life. To depict this, the artists adopted a theatrical language that is fully comprehensible to the audience, that astounds, takes one's breath away and gives some food for thought. In this way, the performance *Pour le meilleur et pour le pire* is an interesting, intelligent piece of art that moves its viewers at every minute. Stating that the show draws on the artists' personal experience is not an exaggeration – the real name of one of the artists is even mentioned a couple of times. Not only do the performers share a love for their art; they also have their personal lives in common.

# „Pour le meilleur et pour le pire”, czyli wieczne powroty do siebie

ALAN MISIEWICZ

Spektakl „*Pour le meilleur et pour le pire*” francusko-fińskiego duetu Cirque Aital to ten rodzaj przedstawienia, do którego chce się wracać i przeżywać na nowo. Urok w nim tkwiący jest bowiem niepodważalny. Zdumiewają tu popisy akrobatyki i umiejętność przystosowania ciała do najbardziej niezwykłych ćwiczeń. Jednak zdaje się, że nie to jest tu najważniejsze. Ważne jest to, że spektakl sam w sobie jest znakomicie skonstruowany, a nitka narracyjna poprowadzona konsekwentnie od początku – gdy zza kurtyny rozbłyskują światła samochodu, który zaraz wjeżdża na scenę – aż do końca – gdy bohaterowie scenę opuszczają. Spektakl jest zwyczajną opowieścią o zwyczajnych ludziach, z którymi bardzo łatwo może się utożsamić widz. Mówi on bowiem o relacji między kochającym się dwojgiem ludzi, którzy nie zawsze się zgadzają, często kłócą – ale jednak zawsze do siebie wracają. Są ze sobą – jak głosi tytuł – na dobre i na złe. W ten sposób godzinne „*Na dobre i na złe*” staje się wielką metaforą życia. A właściwie: ucieczką nie przed życiem i powrotem do niego. Dla jej zobrazowania artyści posługują się zupełnie zrozumiałym dla widzów językiem teatralnym, który zdumiewa, bawi, zapiera dech w piersiach, czasami zastanawia. W ten sposób spektakl „*Na dobre i na złe*” jest interesujący, inteligentny i porywa niemal w każdej minucie swojego trwania. Można wnosić, że czerpie on z osobistych doświadczeń artystów – zresztą, imię Victor pada tu kilka razy. I prawdą jest, że artystów łączy nie tylko miłość do sztuki cyrkowej, ale także wspólne życie prywatne.

**Niespełnione zamiary zostania  
rolnikiem. Akordeon i banjo na scenie**

Nic jednak nie zapowiadało, że ścieżki życiowe Kati Pikkarainen (Finlandia) i Victora Cathala

UNPACK  
THE  
ARTS

## Unfulfilled intention to become a farmer; accordion and banjo on the stage

Nothing foreshadowed that the lives of Kati Pikkariainen (Finland) and Victor Cathala (France) would cross at some point. She came from a family with circus traditions and started her adventure with art at the age of eight in one of the provincial schools near to Helsinki. He wanted to be a farmer and only by chance at the age of eighteen found himself at circus school. When they met for the first time at a circus university, where they were taught by a Polish instructor, she didn't know French, while he couldn't speak English. Yet they started a collaboration which was quickly spotted and appreciated: impressive recommendations came from the Centre National des Arts du Cirque in Châlons-en-Champagne (2003), and a silver medal was earned during the Festival Mondial du Cirque de Demain (2005) in Paris.

*Pour le meilleur et pour le pire* is the second performance in the artistic catalogue of Cirque Aïtal. Their first show, entitled *La piste là*, was produced in 2007. At the very beginning it was created for three artists, as this intimate show starring Victor and Kati was joined by a juggler. In this way a show inspired by the traditional side of circus arts emerged, including such elements as: situational humour and mime, live music (accordion, double bass, trumpet, banjo), games of contrast, and costumes characteristic of a circus show. Also, setting the performance in the oval space of a big top enabled the audience to observe the performers from various perspectives. What is more, *La piste là*, apart from analysing the intricacies of relationships between men and women, serves the primary function of circus, which is, above all, providing entertainment of the highest level. *Pour le meilleur et pour le pire* is a source of top entertainment, but it's worth noting that in this show the narrative is led more by consequence than spectacle. Moreover, in this case the emphasis is placed not on the way the world of circus illusion is constructed, but on what it tells about the world of human behaviour.

(Francja) połączą się. Ona – pochodząca z rodziny o bogatej tradycji cyrkowej – zaczynała swoją przygodę ze sztuką w wieku 8 lat w jednej z prowincjonalnych szkół pod Helsinkami. On natomiast planował zostać rolnikiem i tylko przypadek sprawił, że w wieku 18 lat trafił do szkoły cyrkowej. Gdy spotkali się pierwszy raz na studiach, gdzie jednym z ich wykładowców był Polak, ona nie znała języka francuskiego, on nie umiał mówić po angielsku. Jednak nawiązali współpracę, którą szybko zauważono i doceniono: znakomite rekomendacje wystawione przez Narodowe Centrum Sztuki Cyrkowej w Châlons-en-Champagne (2003), srebrny medal na paryskim Festiwalu Mondial du Cirque de Demain (2005).

„Na dobre i na złe” jest drugim w życiorysie artystycznym Cirque Aitel spektaklem. Pierwszy nosi tytuł „La piste là” i został wyprodukowany w 2007 roku. Początkowo rozpisany był na troje artystów. Z czasem jednak to kameralne widowisko z udziałem Victora, Kati i Muzyka (Kompozytora) rozszerzył Żongler. W ten sposób powstał spektakl, który najbardziej inspiruje się dokonaniem tradycyjnej sztuki cyrkowej: ekspozycją komizmu sytuacyjnego i mimiki, muzyką wykonywaną na żywo (akordeon, kontrabas, trąbka, banjo), grą kontrastów, kostiumami charakterystycznymi dla typowego przedstawienia cyrkowego, umieszczeniem spektaklu w owalnej przestrzeni namiotu, pozwalającym widzom obserwować artystów z każdego jej miejsca. Co więcej, „La piste là”, oprócz tego, że poddaje analizie zagadnienia relacji męsko-żeńskich, to przede wszystkim spełnia typowe zadanie cyrku, jakim jest dostarczenie swojej publiczności rozrywki na najwyższym poziomie. Rozrywki na najwyższym poziomie dostarcza również „Na dobre i na złe”, choć w tym wypadku da się zauważyć już bardzo konsekwentnie poprowadzoną nitkę narracyjną. I po wtóre, tutaj bardziej należy się skupić nie na tym, jak ten świat cyrkowej aluzji jest budowany, lecz na tym, co mówi on o świecie ludzkich zachowań.

### AUTO(biografia) każdego z nas

To, że w spektaklu ważne miejsce zajmuje czerwony samochód marki Simca 1000, jest



Cirque Aïtal – *Pour le meilleur et pour le pire* © Mario Del Curto

### **AUTO(biography) of each of us**

The fact that the car Simca 1000 plays a central role in the show is yet more evidence that *Pour le meilleur et pour le pire* draws on the personal experience of the artists. For Victor and Kati this automobile is a companion in all their journeys through the world. In day-to-day life it is a quick and comfortable means of transport, while in the performance it is the reference point for all the events as well as the central element that cements everything that takes place onstage. The car is frequently turned into a multifunctional 'box' – Kati can easily and mysteriously move from the front seat to the boot, which she suddenly jumps out of to the audience's surprise!

It all starts when the artists – Kati and Victor – drive onto the stage in Simca 100. Everything suggests that they wish to spend a holiday together by the sea. She is small, delicate, light as a feather, but at the same time incredibly fit (everything she can do with her body is simply incredible). When it is necessary, she turns into a mechanic, who while smoking a cigarette tries to solve the problem with the car. By contrast, Victor is tall and strong as an ox – he is the complete opposite of Kati. In the throes of anger he can

kolejnym dowodem na czerpanie z osobistych doświadczeń życiowych. Auto było (jest) bowiem dla Victora i Kati nieodłącznym towarzyszem podczas ich podróży po świecie. O ile w życiu codziennym oznacza ono między innymi możliwość szybkiego i wygodnego przemieszczania się, o tyle w spektaklu jest stałym punktem odniesienia dla wydarzeń i elementem centralnym, spajającym wszystko to, co się dzieje na scenie. Często staje się wielofunkcyjnym „pudełkiem”, w którym Kati ma swobodę szybkiego i tajemniczego przemieszczenia się z przedniego fotela do bagażnika, z którego może nagle i zupełnie niespodziewanie dla publiczności wyskoczyć!

A zaczyna się w momencie, kiedy dwoje bohaterów – Kati i Victor – wjeżdża na scenę Simcą 1000. Wszystko wskazuje na to, że chcą wspólnie spędzić wakacje gdzieś nad wodę. Ona jest malutka, delikatna i lekka jak piórko, a równocześnie nieprawdopodobnie sprawna fizycznie (to, co potrafi zrobić ze swoim ciałem, jest niezwykle). A gdy trzeba – zamienia się w mechanika, który, paląc papierosa, ma rozwiązać problem z samochodem. Victor z kolei jest duży i silny jak niedźwiedź – stanowi zupełne

easily break a couple of planks on his head or... pick up a car. However, as well as bearing this destructive potential Victor has another personality: he is tender, passionate, prone to romanticism and emotion. The authors of the show constructed their protagonists as the carriers of male and female elements. This way, we can witness on the stage rather comprehensive characters – neither schematic, nor sketchy.

The aforementioned red Simca 1000 with the registration plate 8515SR38 is a real protagonist in this story. It witnesses onstage events, but it also comprises the space where we see the friction between the artists' passions: it is in there that they talk, shout at each other, reconcile, or even experience the ecstasy of love. One of the fight scenes is worth mentioning here. Kati shouts at Victor in complete fury, while he – bored to tears – tries to escape this situation. He opens the boot, gets two hollow bricks, sits on them and lights his cigarette in apparent peace and tranquillity. Since Kati's fury doesn't cease and becomes inconvenient to Victor, he gets more hollow bricks out of the trunk and builds... a cross out of them. At this point the notion of 'holy peace' becomes slightly bitter and snide (but also humorous) in its character. It definitely reflects a real human life, which is abundant in arguments, reconciliation, escapes from failures in everyday life or escapes from other human beings. Yet the show is replete with humorous scenes – some of them inspired by the grotesque, black humour, or even absurdity. Truly grotesque is the scene in which artists dismantle from their tiny car an enormously long silencer, which Kati (turned into a mechanic) climbs until she reaches the ceiling of the big top, performing a series of acrobatic stunts all the while.

It is worth noting that the rising notes of grotesqueness, absurdity and black humour are heralded in the first minutes of the show, when the car appearing on the stage turns out to be driven by... a black, barking Schnauzer. It is a meaningful scene, as it serves as an introduction to the problems tackled in the performance: the inability to find common language, and the feeling

przeciwieństwo Kati. Bez problemu w przypiływie złości potrafi złamać na swojej głowie kilka desek czy... podnieść auto. Jednak oprócz tkwiącego w nim destrukcyjnego potencjału nosi w sobie i drugą osobowość: Victor czuły, namiętny, skłonny do romantycznych uniesień i wzruszeń. Twórcy spektaklu skonstruowali zatem swoich bohaterów jako nośniki pierwiastków męskich, jak i żeńskich. W ten sposób mamy na scenie postaci raczej pełne – a nie schematyczne, papierowe.

Wspomniana czerwona Simca 1000 o tablicy rejestracyjnej 8515SR38 to prawdziwy bohater opowieści. Jest on świadkiem wydarzeń na scenie, ale też miejscem, gdzie często ścierają się ze sobą namiętności bohaterowie: to tam oni dyskutują, krzyczą na siebie, godzą się ze sobą, a nawet – co już było powiedziane – oddają miłosnemu uniesieniu. Godna uwagi jest w tym miejscu jedna ze scena ich kłótni. Kati w furiackim szale krzyczy na Victora, on – wyraźnie znużony – szuka ucieczki przed tą sytuacją. Otwiera klapę bagażnika, wyjmując dwa pustaki, na których siada i w pozornym spokoju zapala papierosa. Ponieważ jednak furia Kati wciąż trwa i jest dla Victora uciążliwa, on wyjmując następne pustaki i buduje z nich... krzyż! W tym momencie myśl „święty spokój” nabiera gorzkiego i uszczypliwego (ale i dowcipnego) charakteru. Z pewnością również odzwierciedla realne życie ludzkie, w które wpisane są kłótnia i godzenie się, ucieczka przed niepowodzeniami dnia codziennego lub drugim człowiekiem. Ale scen zabawnych, podobnych do tej jest w spektaklu bardzo dużo. Wiele z nich inspirowane jest przez groteskę, czarny humor czy nawet absurdem. Jak najbardziej groteskowa sytuacja to ta, kiedy bohaterowie odinstalowują ze swojego małego samochodu nieproporcjonalnie długi tłumik, po którym zaraz Kati (przemieniona w mechanika) wspina się aż pod samo sklepienie namiotu cyrkowego, wykonując serię akrobacji.

Należy dodać, że obecność groteski, absurdu, czarnego humoru zapowiadają już pierwsze minuty spektaklu, gdy wjeżdżający na scenę samochód prowadzi... ujadający czarny sznauzer. To ważna scena, ponieważ jest jakby wprowadzeniem w problematykę spektaklu: nieumiejętność znalezienia wspólnego języka,

of estrangement experienced by people living together and loving each other.

### **Intimate character, family atmosphere**

The most remarkable characteristic of the performance is its intimacy. *Pour le meilleur et pour le pire* – if it's possible to put it this way – is a show of rather compact size. It takes place in quite a small big top, which can fit a set audience (350). This way the illusion of limited space and the proximity of action emphasises the impression of 'cosiness'. This impression is built up by only two artists (though there are also two dogs performing). Moreover, the number of props is also marginal, yet those that are present are used for multiple purposes. The bonnet of the car can be turned into a trampoline, which Kati uses to jump 'into water'; if necessary the car seat becomes a sun lounger, while the lights can create romantic scenery for selected scenes. The artists perfectly manage all scenes throughout the show: the pace of the action is under their control, and they order the material such that there's no impression of excess or redundancy. Consequently, the performance is organised and... likeable in its reception.

What is more, *Pour le meilleur et pour le pire* possesses clear characteristics of a family performance. It's enjoyable for both children (the show is addressed to an audience starting at six years old) and adults. It is quite natural then to hear cheerful and unconstrained laughs as well as the outspoken comments of the youngest viewers. The performance is devoid of any vulgar content or ugliness and doesn't expose unnecessary nudity (components that are so widespread in art nowadays that they frequently undermine and impoverish it), and it is also not politically involved. So as to appeal even more strongly to a childlike sensibility, the artists eagerly adopt elements of situational humour – such as trying to break... a desk on Victor's head – but there are also various blunders, mistakes, gestures and moments of mime (Kati deserves special acknowledgement here). At the same time, the performers refer to various ideas from popular culture, and art as a whole, in ways that are easy for the audience to decipher. Organised in such a way, the show's

poczucie obcości istniejące w żyjących ze sobą (kochających się) ludziach.

### **Charakter kameralny, atmosfera familijna**

Najbardziej wyrazistą cechą tego spektaklu jest jego kameralność. „Na dobre i na złe” to – jeśli można tak się wyrazić – spektakl niewielki rozmiarów. Prezentowany jest w cyrkowym namiocie o wymiarach stosunkowo małych, mogących tym samym pomieścić określoną liczbę widzów (350). W ten sposób powstaje złudzenie małości przestrzeni i bliskości akcji, a tym samym – wrażenie „przytulności”. Rozwija ją tylko dwoje artystów (ale oprócz nich w spektaklu pojawiają się jeszcze dwa psy). Niewielka jest też ilość rekwizytów. Jednak te bardzo często pełnią funkcję wieloraką. Maskę samochodu może być trampoliną, z której Kati skacze „do wody”, fotel samochodowy, gdy trzeba, staje się leżakiem plażowym, a światła samochodowe – romantyczną oprawą dla wybranych scen. Artyści świetnie panują nad sytuacją sceniczną, nieustannie kontrolują jej przebieg, dbają o to, by na scenie zawsze był porządek, by nie powstało wrażenie nadmiaru czy zbędności przedmiotów. Spektakl w odbiorze jest więc uporządkowany i... sympatyczny.

Co więcej, „Na dobre i na złe” to widowisko posiadające wyraźne znamiona spektaklu familijnego. Dobrze bawią się na nim zarówno dzieci (spektakl adresowany jest do widzów od lat sześciu), jak i dorośli. Jest więc rzeczą oczywistą usłyszeć szczerzy, dziecięcy śmiech w momencie jego trwania i lapidarne komentarze wypowiedziane przez najmłodszych widzów. Pozbawiony jest on wulgarnych scen i brzydoty, nie eksponuje niepotrzebnej nagości (wspomniane komponenty obecne są w dzisiejszej sztuce tak często, że niejednokrotnie przyczyniają się do jej zbanalizowania i zubożenia), nie jest politycznie zaangażowany. Toteż dla jeszcze mocniejszego przemówienia do dziecięcej wrażliwości artyści chętnie wykorzystują dowcip sytuacyjny – jak na przykład próba złamania na swojej głowie... deski, rozliczne gafy, sceny pomyłek, gesty i miny (uznanie należy się zwłaszcza Kati). Równocześnie nawiązują do rozmaitych kontekstów kultury popularnej i sztuki w ogóle,



material confirms only that it is possible these days to create a performance with a relaxed intelligence.

### **Kati and Victor engage the audience**

Cirque Aital plays with the viewers, engages them in a game, although the interactivity of this show is not its primary characteristic. This quality is revealed in just a handful of scenes – for example, the one in which Victor, as if by accident, pours water onto the audience (not surprisingly, their reaction is rather spontaneous). Here it is also worth mentioning a quite characteristic scene at the very beginning of the show when Victor tries to find radio waves with the car antenna – for this purpose, he approaches Kati with the antenna (a noise comes from the loudspeakers then), and does the same with selected viewers. In some moments, the quality of radio sound is impeccable; in others, it's unbearable. Thus the audience becomes a part of the world presented in *Pour le meilleur et pour le pire*. In terms of the underlying idea, the aforementioned scene links to the humour characteristic of early cinema (comedy built from simple blunders). This comparison with the cinematic form is not accidental, since at some moments the authors draw on its achievements. There is a scene built in the form of quick film cuts: it consists of frames lasting seconds, divided by an alternating light. We witness as Victor looks tenderly at Kati, who keeps looking in a different direction; then Kati looks at Victor, who doesn't notice her; finally, they both look at each other. Victor hands Kati flowers which she eagerly takes; their mouths come together in the gesture of reconciliation. Finally, the last frame comes when we can't see Victor and Kati, since they are in the embrace of love (this is suggested by the next scene). Taking into account the colour of the car, one can risk saying that their embrace must have been very intimate. Also intimate in its presentation is the last scene of this show...

### **Dance will forgive them everything and 'the wind will carry'**

One of the final scenes, the dance scene after which the artists drive away from the stage, is highly symbolic. A bored husband and a wife tired of fights get intertwined in a slow dance.

które bez większych problemów rozszyfrowuje widownia starsza. Tkanka spektaklu zorganizowana w ten sposób udowadnia, że możliwe jest dzisiaj stworzenie poryjającego widowiska z mądrym przesłaniem.

### **Kati i Victor angażują publiczność**

Cirque Aital gra z publicznością, angażuje ją do gry, choć interaktywność tego spektaklu nie jest jego cechą nadrzędną. O takim charakterze przypomina raptem kilka scen; choćby ta, w której Victor – niby przypadkowo – oblewa wodą widzów (ich reakcja jest, oczywiście, żywiołowa). Charakterystyczna jest też jedna ze scen z początku spektaklu, w której Victor anteną samochodową szuka fal radiowych – i w tym celu zbliża ją nie tylko do Kati (z głośników dobywa się wtedy głośny szum), ale również do wybranych widzów. Jakość dźwięku w radiu jest raz dobra, innym razem nie do zniesienia. W ten sposób widzowie stają się pewną częścią świata przedstawionego „Na dobre i na złe”. Wspomniana scena w swoim pomysle nawiązuje poniekąd do dowcipu charakterystycznego dla pierwszych dokonań kina (komizm uzyskany dzięki najprostszym gafom). Porównanie do kina nie jest przypadkowe, gdyż w kilku momentach twórcy inspirowali się jego – to jest kina – dokonaniem. Jest w spektaklu scena zbudowana na zasadzie szybkich cięć filmowych. Składają się na nią trwające po kilka sekund kadry przedzielone gasnącym światłem. Widzimy, jak Victor z czułością patrzy na Kati, spoglądającą w inną stronę; zaraz widzimy, jak Kati patrzy na Victora, który na nią nie patrzy; jak obydwójce patrzą na siebie; jak Victor wręcza jej kwiaty; jak ona je przyjmuje; jak usta Kati i Victora zbliżają się do siebie na znak pojednania; w końcu pada ostatni kadr, na którym już ich nie widzimy, gdyż kochankowie oddają się intymnemu zespoleniu (co sugeruje już następna scena). Biorąc pod uwagę kolor samochodu, można zaryzykować stwierdzenie, że owe intymne zespolenie było naprawdę bardzo intymne. Na pewno intymna w swoim przedstawieniu jest i ostatnia scena spektaklu.

### **Taniec im wszystko wybaczy, a „wiatr uniesie”**

Jedna z ostatnich scen spektaklu, to jest scena tańca, po której dwoje bohaterów odjeżdża

Out of the loudspeakers comes the peaceful and soft voice of Sophie Hunger singing ‚Le vent nous portera’ (‚The wind will carry us’), the dark space of the big top brightened by the delicate lights of the car. The dust drops slowly, while the audience comes to complete standstill and silence. All malice, bantering, neuralgia of coexistence and inability to come to terms no longer matter – they’re the past now. The dance scene symbolises the reconciliation of minds, coming to harmony; finally, it constitutes the visualisation of the theme ‚for better’. The scene is truly sentimental. It is devoid of eroticism, yet it can evoke such associations. The scene depicts the precision of movements and the tenderness of performance at their full. It touches with its beauty – viewers like happy endings.

*Pour le meilleur et pour le pire* is a performance constructed with due attention to every detail and care for narrative clarity. It’s a thorough and well-rounded piece of art, free of any inconsistencies and shortages. In my perception it’s a lightweight show, using accessible and understandable language. It is crucial that, when it comes to the message, this performance is coherent from the very beginning till the very end.

*Pour le meilleur et pour le pire* creates a metaphor for the coexistence of two people. It always includes both positive and negative aspects. This coexistence is full of sadness, sorrow and verbal aggression, but it is balanced with happiness, smiles, satisfaction and tenderness. The authors of this show seem to tell us: ‚This is how a complete relationship between two people looks.’ If it was possible to extend the show title with just a single word, it would be ‚love’. The love of two people is complete only when, apart from forgiveness and respect, there are misunderstandings, regrets and fights. As a matter of fact, Kati and Victor are split on many matters; frequently they are strangers to each other, they argue, they cannot find common language. But still, witnessing their struggles, we can see ourselves as if in the mirror.

samochodem, jest w najwyższym stopniu symboliczna. Znużony mąż i zmęczona przepychankami żona splatają się w powolnym tańcu. Z głośników dobywa się spokojny i ciepły głos Sophie Hunger, śpiewającej „Le Vent nous portera” („Uniesie nas wiatr”), a ciemną przestrzeń namiotu rozjaśnia delikatne światło produkowane przez reflektory samochodu. Pomału opada kurz piasku, a widownia zastyga w absolutnej ciszy. Wszelkie złośliwości i przekomarzanie się bohaterów, newralgia współistnienia czy ich nieumiejętność porozumienia się przestają być aktualne, teraz są już tylko przeszłością. Owa scena tańca jest symbolem pojednania dusz, powrotem ciała do stanu harmonii czy w końcu scenicznym nakreśleniem tytułowego „na dobre”. Jest bardzo sentymentalna. Nie ma w niej nic z erotyki, a jednak ma prawo takie skojarzenia przywoływać. Charakteryzują ją precyzja ruchów oraz czułość wykonania. Wzrusza swoim pięknem, ponieważ widz lubi, gdy oglądana przez niego historia kończy się dobrze.

„Na dobre i na złe” jest spektaklem skonstruowanym z należytą starannością o szczegół i dbałością o jasność fabuły. To spektakl solidny i dopracowany. Nie istnieją w nim żadne zgrzyty, nieścisłości, braki. W swoim tonie jest spektaklem lekkim, posługuje się językiem jasnym, zrozumiałym dla widzów. Najważniejsze jest, że w warstwie przesłania od początku do końca jest konsekwentny. „Na dobre i na złe” staje się metaforą współistnienia dwojga ludzi. Zawsze łączy ono w sobie to, co dobre, jak i to, co złe. Jest więc wypełnione smutkiem, żalem, agresją słowną, ale zawsze równoważą je radość, uśmiech, zadowolenie, czułość. „Tak wygląda pełny związek dwojga ludzi” – zdają się mówić twórcy spektaklu. Gdybyśmy mieli rozszerzyć jego tytuł o jakikolwiek wyraz, to niewątpliwie brzmiałby on „miłość”. Miłość między dwojgiem ludzi jest pełna tylko wtedy, gdy obok przebaczenia i szacunku znajdują się w niej przykrości, nieporozumienia, kłótnie. Faktycznie, Kati i Victora często dzieli bardzo dużo, często są sobie obcy, gniewają się na siebie, nie potrafią siebie zrozumieć. Ale przecież oglądając na scenie ich zmagania się ze sobą, jak w lustrze przyglądamy się sobie samym. Bo przecież „Na

*Pour le meilleur et pour le pire* is about us – the ones seeking understanding with another human being, who is the most important person in our life. Although sometimes it is difficult to coexist, living on one's own is even worse.

„Dobre i na złe” jest spektaklem właśnie o nas – szukających porozumienia z tą drugą osobą, która jest nam w życiu najbliższa. I choć czasami trudno jest współżyć, to przecież żyć samemu jest jeszcze gorzej.

Spektakl „Pour le meilleur et pour le pire” Cirque Aita zaprezentowano podczas 26. edycji CIRCA Festival (18-27 października 2013 r.) we francuskim Auch.

# All Roads Lead to the Tent

DARIO TODOROVIC

Victor had no inkling that he would never again stick a pitchfork into the ground on his family farm.

The acrobats in the streets of Morocco never dreamed of a time when they would perform not in the dusty streets of Tangier but to packed audiences.

Nikolaus thought he would be stuck in the university forever, and would end up in an ordinary job once he did graduate: well-paid, useful, but ordinary all the same.

Only Marie, as she examined a cat, knew this was one of the last exams she would ever perform. Her family tradition and the kernel of creativity burgeoning inside her may have destined her to do something else entirely.

Before long, pitchforks were replaced by circus props, streets were magically transformed into a hall, and the classroom into a real circus tent. As for the cat... it grew to become a tiger.

Things would have been entirely different had the characters in the story been born some thirty years ago. Circus enthusiasts wanted to learn the lore that was all but lost, hidden in the family tents. A movement grew, determined to restore circus to its former glory, transforming it in the process, turning it into something completely different from the traditional sense of the word. The lore started spreading out from the narrow, closed circles. Finally, real circus schools were set up. Today, they are the nurseries of the skills and there is no stopping the flow. Modern circus was designed. Everything fell into place, and as a result a farmer, a dozen street acrobats, an average student, and a girl who was supposed to become a vet could start writing a new story. A

# Sve ceste vode prema šatoru

DARIO TODOROVIC

Victor nije mogao ni slutiti da je zadnji put zabio vile u zemlju na obiteljskoj farmi.

Akrobati s marokanskih ulica nisu mogli sanjati da će uskoro, umjesto na prašnjavim ulicama Tangiera, nastupati pred prepunim dvoranama.

Nikolaus je mislio da će zauvijek ostati zaglavljen u studentskim klupama, a nakon što se iz njih iskopa, raditi najobičniji posao na svijetu. Solidno plaćen i koristan, ali ipak jedan sasvim običan posao.

Jedino je Marie znala, dok je pregledavala mačku, da joj je ovo jedan od posljednjih pregleda. Jer zbog obiteljske tradicije i kreativnosti koju nosi u sebi, možda je ipak predodređena da radi nešto sasvim drukčije.

Nije prošlo dugo, a vile su zamijenili cirkuski rekviziti, ulica se nekim čudom transformirala u dvoranu, učionica u pravi pravcati cirkuski šator. A mačka? Ona je narasla u tigra.

A sve bi bilo drukčije da su se glavni akteri ove priče rodili samo tridesetak godina ranije. Cirkuski entuzijasti htjeli su naučiti znanja koja su gotovo nestala zatvorena u obiteljske šatore. Pokret koji je odlučio cirkusu vratiti staru slavu, ali potpuno ga transformirati od tradicionalnog poimanja riječi. Znanje se iz uskih, zatvorenih krugova počelo širiti. Konačno, osnovane su prave škole cirkusa koje su danas rasadnik vještina koje se više ne mogu zaustaviti. Osmišljen je suvremeni cirkus. Karte su se posložile i stvoreni su uvjeti da jedan farmer, desetak uličnih akrobata, jedan sasvim prosječni student i nesuđena veterinarica započnu jednu novu priču. Priču koja gotovo i nema dodirnih točaka sa svime što su znali i radili prije. Jedan posve novi život.

story that has almost nothing to do with anything they knew or did before. A new life.

It would have been a nice and quiet life for Victor Cathala, because he really liked being a farmer. It is evident from the passion in his voice as he describes his life before he turned eighteen. He had everything he needed on the family farm. A job he liked, and enough time to devote to football and rugby. But his love of horses led him on an unexpected journey. Some people that had ties with a circus saw him break in his horse with great skill. They saw a brawny, agile young man, with a body honed by sports, riding his horse with consummate skill, and decided to invite him to join them for a circus audition. As Victor recounts today, he joined them out of curiosity. He stayed three days, then fifteen, and didn't expect much from them or indeed from himself. But something did change. He saw a world he could belong to, even though it may have seemed absurd mere days ago. He decided to take a plunge and go down the road that has led him to where he is now. To a circus tent packed to the rafters. Packed with people who give him a standing ovation and call him and his partner Kati Pikkarainen for a fifth encore. The incredibly likeable, everyday tale is what the viewers are able to recognise underneath the original dramaturgy and the stunning skill the performers use to move them. *Pour le meilleur et pour le pire* is a show that many of their fellow artists would give an arm and a leg to perform in, because the elation of the audience cannot be faked. This is the moment circus artists live for. The moment that makes the sacrifice worth it. And the sacrifice is an integral part of circus life just as much as the juggling balls the performers carry around.

The path that led Moroccan acrobats from the streets of Tangier to a full audience in Auch, France is a story worth recounting. They performed their incredible but rough acrobatic stunts to kill time and to wow and enthrall the tourists who would give them some money. As a stroke of fate, director Aurélien Bory came to Morocco looking for talented acrobats who would help him achieve something on a grand

Bio bi to jedan sasvim lijep i miran život jer Victor Cathala baš je volio biti farmer. Čuje se to prema strasti s kojom govori o tome kako je sve izgledalo prije njegove 18. godine. Na obiteljskoj farmi do tada je imao sve što mu je trebalo. Posao koji voli, a stigao se i posvetiti nogometu i ragbiju. Ali ljubav prema konjima odvela ga je u potpuno neočekivanom smjeru. Vještina kojom je krotio svog konja posve slučajno zapela je za oko ljudima koji su imali veze s cirkusom. Vidjeli su kršnog i spretnog mladića tijela isklesanog sportom kako suvereno jaše i odlučili pozvati ga da im se pridruži na audiciji za cirkusanta. Kako sam Victor danas govori, s njima je pošao više iz znatiželje. Prvo na tri dana, zatim na petnaest, ne očekujući ništa ni od njih ni od sebe. Ali nešto se ipak promijenilo. Vidio je da postoji taj svijet kojemu bi ipak mogao pripadati, koliko se god to još nedavno činilo nevjerojatnim. Odlučio je prelomiti odluku i krenuti smjerom koji ga je odveo do danas. Do prepunog šatora. Punog ljudi koji su na nogama i neumorno već peti put na bis zovu njega i njegovu partnericu Kati Pikkarainen. Jer nevjerojatno simpatična, gotovo svakodnevna priča ono je što gledatelji prepoznaju ispod originalne dramaturgije i zapanjujuće vještine kojom su ih uspjeli ganuti. *Pour le meilleur et pour le pire* predstava je za koju bi mnogi drugi njihovi kolege dali sve da mogu glumiti u njoj, jer ovakva reakcija razdragane publike ne može biti glumljena. A to je trenutak za koji cirkuski umjetnici žive. Trenutak koji vrijedi silnih odricanja, a koja su sastavni dio cirkuskog života jednako kao loptice za žongliranje koje nose sa sobom.

Put kojim su marokanski akrobati s ulica Tangiera stigli ovdje u punu dvoranu u francuskom Auchu priča je koju vrijedi prepričavati. Nevjerojatne, ali nebrušene akrobatske vještine godinama su koristili za ubijanje vremena i da zadive turiste koji bi im, očarani, udijelili nešto novca. Sudbina je htjela da posve slučajno u Maroko stigne redatelj Aurélien Bory s namjerom da u ovoj zemlji pronađe talentirane akrobate i pokuša s zajedno njima napraviti nešto veliko. Nešto suvislo što će imati glavu i rep, što će pričati jednu zaokruženu priču, za razliku od njihovih uličnih točaka, koliko god one atraktivne bile.

scale. Something that would have a beginning and an end, telling a complete tale, unlike their street acts, no matter how attractive they were. Accidentally or on purpose, he went to northern Morocco and stumbled upon the Groupe Acrobatique de Tanger. Several years and a hit show later, they are all in Auch. Their wonderful show, *Azimut*, which has awed the most demanding audiences, will become famous, because when all the bodies come together to tell a story, the eyes see the kind of magic that seldom happens, even in circus.

The story told by Nikolaus seems even stranger. He strolled into circus quite by chance. He was with a friend. As he waited for the friend to come back, he saw beautiful, agile girls rehearse their acts. Something clicked inside his head. He could do something to get closer to them. He already knew he had a talent for fooling around, and he usually displayed it in all the wrong places. If there is the right place to clown about, that would be the circus. He took up juggling, because he felt that balls, clubs and pins were better suited to him than books. Before he knew it, his life turned upside down. That is why he is now standing on his head in a barrel in the middle of the tent in Auch. While other clowns run around doing their stuff around the barrel, three balls leap into the air from it, and everyone knows Nikolaus is inside, juggling them skilfully, although it would appear that being crammed head-first into a barrel is not exactly conducive to juggling. This is just one of the skills he has learned in a flourishing career that has made him one of the leading names of the new circus scene. Everyone knows who Nikolaus is today.

Marie Molliens' path is different, but even her path, that seems all but predestined, paints a perfect picture of the diversity of the circus people who have all happened to come together here, in the small town of Auch. Many of Marie's family members are in a troupe, Rasposo. Although she thought she would choose a different life and become a vet, the call of the circus, which she had been exposed to since early childhood, was too strong. Now, as she walks down a tightrope in her complex

Slučajno ili ne, baš je na sjeveru Maroka naišao na Groupe Acrobatique de Tanger. Više godina i jednu hit predstavu kasnije, našli su se ovdje u Auchu. A o predivnoj predstavi *Azimut* kojom su zadivili čak i najzahtjevniju publiku, još će se puno čuti jer tek kad se sva tijela spoje u jednu priču, nastaje magija pred očima kakva je rijetka čak i za cirkus.

Priča koju nam Nikolaus priča čini se još čudnijom. U cirkus je ušetao neplanirano. Bio je pratnja prijatelju. I dok ga je čekao, vidio je lijepe i gipke djevojke koje vježbaju. U glavi mu je nešto na brzinu kliknulo. Mogao bi pokušati biti bliže njima. Ionako zna da oduvijek ima talent za ludiranje, koje je pokazivao na potpuno pogrešnim mjestima. Ako igdje postoji pravo mjesto za raditi klauna od sebe, onda je to cirkus. Primio se žongliranja, jer mu se činilo da mu loptice, čunjevi i palice u ruci leže bolje od knjige. Prije nego što je bio svjestan toga, život mu se okrenuo naglavačke. Zato sada stoji okrenut s nogama u zraku u bačvi nasred šatora u Auchu. Dok drugi klaunovi trče i izvode svašta oko nje, i iz te bačve u zrak lete tri loptice za koje je jasno da njima vješto barata Nicolaus, iako se čini da je ovako stisnut i prevrnut u gotovo nemogućoj poziciji za žongliranje. To je samo jedna od vještina koju je naučio u bogatoj karijeri u kojoj je postao jedno od najpoznatijih imena nove cirkuske scene. Danas svi znaju tko je Nikolaus.

Jedino je put Marie Molliens drukčiji, ali i takav, gotovo predodređen put, daje savršenu sliku toga koliko je šaroliko cirkusko društvo koje se igrom slučaja našlo baš ovdje u malom Auchu. Velik dio Mariine obitelji dio je trupe Rasposo. Iako je mislila da će krenuti drukčijim putem i biti veterinar, zov cirkusa kojem je od malena bila izložena bio je prejak. Sada dok u svojoj kompleksnoj predstavi *Morseur* hoda po špagi, vrijeme za nju stoji. U tom trenu dok publika nijemo gleda hoće li uspjeti ili će tresnuti na pod, sažeta je cijela životna filozofija koju cirkuska vještina predstavlja. Marie se, kao i njezini kolege, morala posve posvetiti ovom trenutku iza kojeg stoje godine vježbanja. I godine velikog odricanja.

show *Morsure*, time stands still for her. As the spectators stare mutely to see if she would make it or crash to the floor, this is where the essence of the entire life philosophy represented by circus skill is. Marie, like her fellow circus artists, has had to devote everything to achieve this moment, the moment that comes after years of practicing. And years of sacrifice.

No, this is not a glamorous life, although the limelight is strong, as is the make-up and the smiles on the faces of the performers as they do things that seem impossible. The tremble in Victor's hand as he holds his Kati metres up in the air, and a bead of sweat rolling down Marie's powdered brow, give us a hint about what is going on behind the masks put on for the spectators. Who have come to see the show from their homes. Who will see the spectacle to the end, sigh in fascination many times, applaud sincerely and heartily, have an after-show beer and then go back home. But where is the home for our circus heroes? Miles away, even if they are physically close to it. After years of arduous training and rehearsing for a show, they will embark on a tour. They will wipe the sweat off their brow, change their clothes, pack the few things they carry with them and move on. A new audience is waiting in a new town. And it will never grow less demanding.

Even when our circus heroes do not walk on a tightrope, they always walk on the edge, and this is revealed by the smallest of things. As Victor and Kati sit in the lecture hall in Cine 32 and talk to the press about their show, a jar of cream that protects muscles and joints against injury sits on the table next to them. Injury is one of the worst things that can happen to a circus artist and they don't like to talk about it at all. The lads from the company La Meute recall a recent accident when their colleague fell in a rehearsal for their show and broke her leg. In a split second, her circus career was over. Dreams of a big top and an even bigger career, gone in a second. As the spectators watch the acrobatics performed by six young men, they don't know that a girl was supposed to be performing alongside them. The show was

Ne, ovo nije glamurozan život, iako su svjetla reflektora jaka, kao i šminka i smiješak na licima izvođača dok rade naizgled nemoguće stvari. Victorov drhtaj ruke dok svoju Kati vješto drži metrima visoko i kap znoja koja klizi niz Mariino napudrano čelo, govore o tome što se sve odvija iza maske za gledatelje. Koji su na predstavu stigli iz svog doma. Pogledat će ovaj spektakl do kraja, više puta fascinirano uzdahnuti, zapljeskati iskreno i srčano, popiti pivo nakon šoua i vratiti se kući. Ali gdje je kuća za naše cirkuse heroje? Miljama daleko, čak i ako se trenutačno ne nalaze daleko od nje. Nakon nekoliko godina napornog treniranja i uvježbavanja predstave, stigla je sezona turneje. Obrisat će znoj sa čela, presvući se, spakirati to malo stvari koje nose sa sobom i krenuti dalje. Nova publika u novom gradu čeka. I nikad ne postaje manje zahtjevna.

Čak kada naši cirkuski junaci ni ne hodaju po žici, zapravo uvijek hodaju po rubu, što odaje tek jedna mala sitnica. Dok Victor i Kati sjede u predavaonici Cine 32 i novinarima govore o svojoj predstavi, na stolu pokraj njih stoji krema koja mišiće i zglobove čuva od ozljeda. Jer ozljeda je jedna od najgorih stvari koje se cirkusantu može dogoditi i tema o kojoj nerado govore. Tako se momci iz skupine Cie La Meute prisjećaju kako je nedavno njihova kolegica na treningu za zajedničku predstavu slomila nogu. Ta je sekunda za nju značila ne samo stanku, već i potpuno napuštanje cirkusa. Snovi o velikom šatoru i još većoj karijeri srušeni su u trenu. Dok gledatelji gledaju akrobacije šest mladića, ni ne znaju da je ovdje trebala biti i djevojka, jer šou je preuređen i mora ići dalje kao da ona nikad nije ni bila član ekipe. A čak i ako ozljeda nekog od izvođača i nije preteška, svejedno postoje samo dvije opcije, od kojih niti jedna nije ugodna. Ili će trupa, koja mora nastupati dalje, pronaći zamjenu, ili se cijeli šou mora ukinuti do daljnjega. Dok bi na mjesto nekog od akrobata u predstavi Azimut privremeno mogao uskočiti kolega, Victor i Kati znaju da nekoga od njih ne može mijenjati nitko. Stanka bi za njih imala dvostruku težinu jer uz to što zajedno kroče po maloj pozornici cirkusa, isto čine i u privatnom životu. Svjesni da se u cirkusu živi iz dana u dan i da ne postoje

rearranged and it must go on, as if she had never been part of the team. Even if a performer is not seriously injured, there are only two, equally unattractive options. Either the troupe, which has to continue performing, finds a replacement, or the whole show must be cancelled until further notice. While another acrobat could conceivably take the place of an injured player in *Azimat*, Victor and Kati know that they are both irreplaceable. Having to take a break would be double trouble for them, because they do not travel together only on the small stage of a circus: they do it in their private life, too. They know that in circus one lives a precarious existence and that there are no long-term plans. Having a child would be a luxury for them, a luxury greater than the greatest circus tent in the world. The two of them and the team they travel with must be like a family because they spend days together. Although she is used to being constantly on the road, Kati's voice is full of longing as she says she would like to spend at least two weeks in the same place. Two weeks seem longer than two years to them. Their moods will depend on the weather. When it's nice and sunny, circus life seems fine and all the trials and tribulations are easy to bear. But when it rains and it's cold for days on end, living in a van becomes depressing.

And as for the money... It is less secure than the tightrope they balance on. As Nikolaus told us, even if your show is a hit, there is no guarantee that you will strike it rich. After all, *Tout est bien!*, no matter how enthusiastic its reception has been, has never sold out. Even though everyone is so positive about the incredible boom of the French circus scene, and it is undoubtedly a positive development, there is a downside. The competition is fierce. At any given moment in France there are 800-odd shows, and even the excellent reviews garnered by *Tout est bien!* will not guarantee that there will be no empty seats in the tent. Fortunately, France is generous in its support to the artists and has taken off some of the weight they feel as they hurl their partner into the air. But the people are not in the circus to have an expensive car and a big house. Their wealth is measured in different units.

dugoročna planiranja. A tek dijete sada bi za njih značilo luksuz veći i od najvećeg šatora na svijetu. Njih dvoje i ekipa s kojom putuju moraju činiti obitelj jer zajedno provode dan za danom. Iako je na neprekidna putovanja naviknula, Kati s čežnjom u glasu priča kako bi htjela na jednom mjestu provesti barem dva tjedna. Samo dva tjedna njima se čine dužima od dvije godine. I njihovo raspoloženje jako ovisi o vremenu. Kad je lijep i sunčan dan, cirkuski život ne izgleda tako loše i sve se tegobe i naponi nekako lakše podnesu. Ali kad kiša i hladno vrijeme ne posustaju danima, život u kombiju postaje depresivan.

A novac? On je klimaviji od žice po kojoj balansiraju. Kako Nikolaus tumači, čak niti hit predstava nije neki jamac da ćeš se obogatiti. Jer *Tout es Bien!*, koliko god je ljudi s oduševljenjem prihvatili, još niti jednom nije bila potpuno rasprodana. Koliko god svi o nevjerojatnom procvatu cirkuske scene u Francuskoj govore pozitivno, što bez sumnje i jest, on donosi i jednu lošu stranu. Konkurencija je postala zastrašujuća. Gotova u svakom trenutku samo u Francuskoj je na raspolaganju osamstotinjak predstava koje se mogu pogledati, pa čak niti odlične kritike koje je *Tout es Bien!* požnjeo nisu dovoljan jamac da će svako mjesto u šatoru biti popunjeno. Srećom, Francuska ne štedi u podupiranju umjetnika, pa im je s leđa skinula mali djelić težine koju osjećaju dok partnera bacaju u zrak. Ali ljudi u cirkusu ne rade da bi imali skup auto i veliku kuću. Njihovo se bogatstvo mjeri nečim potpuno drugim.

Mjeri se količinom pozitivne energije koju dobivaju natrag od publike jer ovdje pred nama izvode magiju dio koje ćemo odnijeti sa sobom i nakon što se reflektori ugase. Oni su pjevači koji pjevaju i kad vise naglavačke. Oni su plesači koji plešu po rubu. Oni su gimnastičari, tijela i snažnog i gipkog. Oni su i glumci s osmijehom koji ne odaje ni strah ni bol.

Uza svo odricanje, tvrde da svoj životni put nikad ne bi mijenjali. Mogućnost da izraziš onu najdublju kreativnost u sebi koja je popraćena još iskrenijim oduševljenim pljeskom nešto je





Cie Pré-O-Coupé / Nikolaus – *Tout est bien ! Catastrophe et bouleversement* © MartinWagenhan

Their wealth is measured by the positive energy they receive back from the audience, because they have come before us to do their magic, and we will take it home with us once the spotlights are turned off. They are singers who sing even when they are suspended upside down. They are dancers who dance on the edge. They are gymnasts, their bodies supple and strong. They are actors whose smiles do not speak about fear or pain.

Regardless of all the sacrifices, they are all adamant they would never choose a different life. The chance to express your deepest creativity and be rewarded by the sincere, enthusiastic applause is something that cannot be measured in money or working hours. They are happy and thankful that they can live their unglamorous and difficult dream. A dream they would not give up for anything.

That is what they all say. All except Nikolaus. He claims he envies the ordinary people doing ordinary but useful jobs. He seems to be

što se ne može mjeriti ni novcem ni radnim vremenom. Sretni su i zahvalni što mogu živjeti svoj neglamurozni i teški san. Ali ipak njihov san kojeg ne bi mijenjali ni za što.

Tako kažu svi. Osim Nikolausa. On tvrdi da zavidi običnim ljudima koji rade obične, ali korisne poslove. Kao da ga jako muči grižnja savjesti što se njegov život sveo na traženje načina ne kako pomoći ljudima na praktičan način, već kako ih silnim kreativnim budalaštinama koje izvodi nasmijati do suza. Govori kao da ne zna da je nasmijati ljude zapravo najteži posao na svijetu, a on ga radi jako dobro. Svejedno, Nikolaus ozbiljan kaže kako ovdje u Auchu u svojstvu cirkusanta sjedi nasuprot mene i razgovara sa mnom. „Ja sam ovdje pogreškom. Da mogu vratiti vrijeme, nikad ne bih ušao u taj prvi šator s kojim je ovo sve započelo. Vratio bih se na fakultet i nastavio učiti jer čak i oni najgluplji mogu položiti sve ispite, samo im treba više truda no drugima.“ Jake su to riječi koje su u kontradiktornosti sa smiješkom i zadovoljstvom na znojnom i

consumed by remorse, because his life has been reduced to searching for ways in which to make people laugh themselves silly by fooling around creatively, instead of helping people in a more practical way. When he says this it is as if he does not know that making people laugh is the toughest job in the world, and the job he does so well. Nikolaus is nevertheless serious as he tells me in Auch, sitting across from me, being interviewed as a circus artist, "I am here by mistake. If I could turn back time, I would never enter the first tent where it all started. I would go back to the university and continue with my studies, because even the dumbest people can pass all the exams, they only need to put in more effort." These are strong words that contradict the smile and satisfaction on his sweat-streaked, powdered face. He could not hide the satisfaction when the tent exploded into seemingly endless applause. What Nikolaus means is that he does not relish the applause all that much, because he merely made people laugh and be merry, instead of making them a pair of shoes or fixing their teeth. The smile betrays his true feelings. After all, we know: never trust a clown.

napudranom licu. To zadovoljstvo nije mogao skriti kad je šator odjekivao od pljeska koji nije namjeravao stati. Nikolaus nam želi reći da u tom pljesku baš i ne uživa jer ljude je samo nasmijao i razveselio, a nije im napravio cipele ili popravio zube. Taj izdajnički smiješak ga ipak odaje. Uostalom, znamo da klaunu nikad ne treba vjerovati.

# *In-between Circus.*

## Cultures, Lands and Disciplines

HERMAN BASHIRON  
MENDOLICCHIO

CIRCa Festival in Auch, now in its 26<sup>th</sup> edition, has yet again turned out to be one of the most prestigious gatherings of professionals, critics, artists and students of the contemporary circus. A specialised audience with an appetite for new trends, on the lookout for new worlds and circus acts, wandered enthusiastically and excitedly around the revamped military stables which these days host the festival alongside several *chapiteaux* and spaces scattered along the area by the river Gers in Auch.

Bright eyes, circus faces, inquisitive gazes and expressions filled the spaces, creating an atmosphere bursting with imagination, magic and playfulness. CIRCa Festival – with its shows, encounters and parallel activities – is so much more than just another international festival; rather it is a unique opportunity to research, analyse and reflect on a multitude of aspects linked to the contemporary circus. The ongoing debate on the evolution, transformation and transition between the traditional circus and the contemporary one; the creation of new conventions; the issue of interdisciplinarity, which is gaining an ever increasing momentum; the identification of new frontiers, trends, techniques and skills; the engagement of, and the different reactions and relationships which develop between, the artists and the audience; the limits to experimentation and risk and so on – are just a few of the fascinating and intriguing aspects informing the recent discussions in the world of contemporary circus.

It is a circus more and more *in-between*, and one that encompasses new and old worlds, thus strengthening the bond between cultures and disciplines. The aspects related to the intercultural nature of contemporary circus, the attention and assimilation of elements originating from different

# *Circo in-between.*

## Culture, territori e discipline.

HERMAN BASHIRON  
MENDOLICCHIO

La ventiseiesima edizione del CIRCa Festival di Auch ha rappresentato anche quest'anno uno dei più importanti punti d'incontro per professionisti, critici, artisti, studenti e amanti del circo contemporaneo. Un pubblico specializzato, affamato di nuove tendenze, in cerca di nuovi mondi e nuove gesta circensi si aggirava entusiasta ed emozionato tra le magnifiche scuderie militari ristrutturate – oggi sede del CIRCa – e i molteplici *chapiteaux* e sale sparsi lungo l'area che costeggia il fiume Gers di Auch.

Occhi vivi, facce da circo, sguardi ed espressioni piene di curiosità riempivano gli spazi e creavano costantemente un'atmosfera festiva piena di fantasia, di magia e di giocosità. Aldilà del classico svolgimento di un Festival internazionale – con i suoi spettacoli principali, gli incontri e le attività parallele – il CIRCa festival rappresenta un'occasione unica di ricerca, analisi e riflessione su molteplici aspetti relazionati con il circo contemporaneo. La costante discussione sull'evoluzione, la trasformazione e la transizione tra il circo tradizionale e il circo contemporaneo; la definizione di nuovi codici; la sempre più presente questione dell'interdisciplinarietà; l'identificazione di nuove frontiere, tendenze, tecniche e abilità; la partecipazione e le diverse reazioni e relazioni che si stabiliscono tra artisti e pubblico; i limiti della sperimentazione e del rischio; ecc., sono solo alcuni degli aspetti più interessanti che animano le recenti discussioni nel mondo del circo contemporaneo.

Un circo quindi sempre più *in-between*, che si ritrova ad accogliere in sé vecchi e nuovi mondi e che diviene, giorno dopo giorno, sempre più interculturale e interdisciplinare. Gli aspetti legati all'interculturalità del circo contemporaneo, l'attenzione e l'assimilazione di elementi provenienti da diverse culture, l'intrinseca e fondamentale questione della mobilità,

cultures, and the inherent and fundamental issue of mobility will therefore be the main thrust of the festival as covered in this article.

For those embarking upon a circus career, mobility is an ever-present feature, right from the very first stages of education and training. It is worth noting that when it comes to training and development the majority of countries do not provide a totality or great variety of courses and training opportunities, and many artists have to look further afield in order to gain adequate training and pursue their dream of becoming professional circus artists. Over the past 40 years France has been one of the countries that gave birth to and developed the so-called 'new circus', and at present it hosts several circus schools which have become world famous. Moscow, Stockholm and Montreal, to name just a few places, are other avenues that a number of artists have explored and pursued in their quest for good quality training.

If on the one hand being on the move is necessary during the first years of training, it becomes indispensable in the subsequent stages of creativity, production and touring. A show reaches its peak after tens – sometimes hundreds – of performances, and this necessitates going around the world in search of festivals, events and opportunities through which to showcase one's work.

The constant wandering between countries and cultures becomes an integral part of circus artists' character and personality. Continuously stimulated by new experiences, in constant contact with new people, ideas and visions, artists absorb elements from the different corners of the world where they have lived, and, to greater and lesser extents, integrate, change and use them in their creative process.

Besides the obvious repercussions on the personal life of these artists – communal living, groups of artists who travel and live together for years, couples from different countries who get together through the circus – the intercultural dimension is projected and becomes an integral part of the creative process and of the different

costituiranno quindi la principale chiave di lettura del festival in quest'articolo.

La questione della mobilità è presente nel circo sin dalle primissime fasi dell'educazione e della formazione. Bisogna ricordare che nella maggior parte dei paesi non sono presenti tutte le differenti fasi educative e quindi molti artisti sono costretti a cercare altrove le opportunità per ottenere una buona formazione e continuare a inseguire il sogno di diventare un professionista del circo. La Francia è il paese dove, negli ultimi quaranta anni, è nato e si è sviluppato il cosiddetto "Nuovo Circo" e dove sono presenti diverse scuole circensi oramai affermate in tutto il mondo. Mosca, Stoccolma, Montreal, solo per citarne alcune, sono altre vie che diversi artisti contemporanei hanno scelto e percorso in cerca di una formazione di qualità.

Se è necessario essere in movimento sin dalle prime fasi di formazione, diventa indispensabile nelle successive fasi di creazione, produzione e *touring*. Uno spettacolo raggiunge il suo culmine dopo decine – a volte centinaia – di rappresentazioni e ciò significa dover girare il mondo in cerca di festival, manifestazioni e occasioni dove poter presentare il proprio lavoro.

Questo movimento continuo tra territori e culture diverse diventa parte integrante del carattere e della personalità degli artisti di circo. Alle prese con nuovi stimoli, in contatto continuo con nuove persone, idee e visioni, gli artisti assorbono gli elementi presenti nei diversi angoli di mondo dove hanno vissuto e, chi più chi meno, li integra, modifica e utilizza nel proprio processo creativo.

Aldilà delle evidenti ripercussioni nella vita personale di ognuno – esempi di vita collettiva, gruppi di artisti che si muovono e vivono insieme per anni, coppie di paesi diversi che si trovano e si uniscono grazie al circo - la dimensione interculturale si riflette anche nel processo creativo e nei diversi elementi che compongono la totalità dello spettacolo.

### **Musica e Complicità**

La scelta, la creazione e l'uso della musica e del suono rappresentano un chiaro componente di

elements that make up the totality of the show.

### Music and complicity

The choice, creation and use of music and sounds is an obvious component of interculturality. In the various shows staged at CIRCa, the tracks and sounds always played an important role, at times almost taking centre stage.

The influences, styles and musical trends chosen – or integrated in the compositions of – the companies performing in Auch stretch between the different corners of the earth, from north to south, east and west, creating in their wake a universe of rhythms without frontiers.

From the traditional Arabic, Kurdish and Berber sounds of the show *Azimut* (by Aurélien Bory with the Groupe Acrobatique de Tanger) and *La Meute* (by the homonymous group La Meute), through the Balkan rhythms, the Gipsy essences, the improvised hip-hop moves and the all-too-evident Russian stylistic influences featured in the show *Klaxon* by the company Akoreacro, all the way to the tango, the swing and the capoeira dancing featured in the show *Morsure* by Compagnie Rasposo, one can see how music becomes an indispensable source of intercultural inspiration. Music is therefore a form of expression that opens up the imagination and the eyes, allowing one to look at and think of the different countries and cultures that are never too far away for an artist and are always within a show's reach and vital experience.

Music thus becomes an instrument of complicity, a device that puts the companies at ease and accompanies the unfolding of acts and acrobatics, intimately linking artists in a common motion and destiny.

The show *La Meute*, by the homonymous acrobatic company, is a striking example of complicity and union. The company is made up of six young people, five French and one Catalan, who came together during the early years of their training and engaged in a collective creative process. They met in Paris where they studied together for two years and later decided to move to Stockholm, where they have pursued and

interculturalità. Nei diversi spettacoli presentati durante il CIRCa Festival di Auch, le musiche e i diversi suoni hanno sempre avuto un peso importante e giocato spesso un ruolo da protagonista.

Le influenze, gli stili e le tendenze musicali scelte e composte da alcune compagnie presenti ad Auch, attraversano i confini del mondo da nord a sud e da est ad ovest, creando un universo di ritmi senza frontiere.

Dalle tradizionali musiche arabe, curde o berbere presenti nello spettacolo *Azimut* (di Aurélien Bory con il Gruppo acrobatico di Tangeri) e *La Meute* (dell'omonimo gruppo La Meute); dai ritmi balcanici, le essenze tzigane, i momenti d'improvvisazione hip-hop e una chiarissima influenza stilistica russa, presenti nello spettacolo *Klaxon* della compagnia Akoreacro; fino ad arrivare al tango, lo swing o i movimenti di capoeira presenti nello spettacolo *Morsure* di Rasposo, possiamo notare come la musica diventa una necessaria fonte d'ispirazione interculturale. La musica quindi come una forma d'espressione che spalanca l'immaginazione, che ci fa aprire gli occhi e lanciare lo sguardo e il pensiero verso territori e culture diverse che nella vita di un artista circense non sono mai lontane, ma sempre a portata di spettacolo e di esperienza vitale.

La musica diventa quindi anche uno strumento di complicità, un dispositivo che mette a proprio agio le compagnie, che accompagna lo svolgimento di numeri ed acrobazie e che unisce intimamente gli artisti in un moto e un destino comune.

Un chiaro esempio di complicità e unione lo possiamo trovare nello spettacolo *La Meute*, dell'omonimo collettivo acrobatico "La Meute". La compagnia è formata da sei ragazzi, cinque francesi e un catalano, che sin dai primi anni della loro formazione si sono uniti e concentrati in un processo creativo collettivo. Si sono prima conosciuti a Parigi, dove hanno studiato insieme per due anni, e poi hanno deciso di trasferirsi tutti insieme a Stoccolma, dove hanno continuato per altri tre anni il loro processo formativo come

perfected their training for a further three years. The intimacy of the group, the deep trust and familiarity between them, is palpable in every second of their show. The scenography itself is reminiscent of a *Hammam*, a place that by definition symbolises intimacy, complicity, and at the same time is a social meeting point, a place to nurture the body and spend time in a serene and pleasant atmosphere.

Such an obvious scenographic reference is accompanied by the choice of music and singing. The extraordinary voice of Bahoz Témaux – one of the company's artists of Kurdish-Syrian origin – plunges the show into a sacred atmosphere, one that is intimate and cosy but that gives even more prominence to the profane nuances of the acrobatic acts. The Kurdish-inspired songs and music – reminiscent of those of Bahoz descent – as well as some scenographic aspects of the show, add some elements of interculturality to a piece that brims with rhythm, risk, verticality and sadomasochism.

*Klaxon*, by Akoreacro, is yet another example of a show where complicity amongst artists calls the shots. The company was born when four artists met in 2005 (Basile, Claire, Romain and Maxime) and trained, developed and grew in the streets, schools and tents of France, Stockholm and Moscow, their time spent together culminating in the harmonious union of six acrobats and five musicians. Eleven artists, a collective process, an incessant rhythm, and a constant attention to the audience – which they welcome in their first, much coveted tent – make up the show *Klaxon*. A true alchemy of music and acrobatics, to put it in the words of the artists, it showcases acts where the acrobats become musicians and the musicians themselves improvise as acrobats. The result is a company and show that is flexible, plastic, vivacious and dynamic, helped along by musical rhythms which draw from the Balkan, Russian and Gipsy traditions. The presence of the musician Vladimir, who introduces the acts in Russian, or that of the acrobat Antonio, who translates them 'unfaithfully' to the audience in Spanish, gives a touch of absurdity and interculturality in a show that defends the traditional conventions of the circus and the

collettivo. L'intimità del gruppo, la sensazione profonda di confidenza e fiducia, si respira in ogni momento del loro spettacolo. La stessa scenografia ricorda l'ambientazione di un *hammam*, un luogo che per eccellenza simboleggia l'intimità, la complicità e allo stesso tempo rappresenta un punto d'incontro sociale, dove curare il proprio corpo e dove passare serenamente e piacevolmente il proprio tempo.

A questo chiaro riferimento scenografico si accompagna la scelta della musica e del canto. La straordinaria voce di Bahoz Témaux – un artista della compagnia con origini curdo-siriane – immerge lo spettacolo in un'atmosfera sacra, intima e raccolta che in realtà fa da contraltare agli aspetti profani dei numeri acrobatici. L'ispirazione dei canti e delle musiche del Kurdistan - tratte dalle radici familiari di Bahoz – così come alcuni aspetti scenografici dello spettacolo, aggiungono degli elementi d'interculturalità a questa esibizione piena di ritmo, rischio, verticalità e sadomasochismo.

Un altro spettacolo di straordinaria complicità tra gli artisti è *Klaxon*, della compagnia Akoreacro. Un collettivo nato dall'incontro tra quattro artisti nel 2005 (Basile, Claire, Roman e Maxime), che si è formato, sviluppato e cresciuto tra le strade, le scuole e i tendoni della Francia, di Stoccolma e di Mosca, fino ad arrivare oggi all'unione armonica di sei acrobati e cinque musicisti. Undici artisti, un processo collettivo, un ritmo incessante e una continua attenzione verso il pubblico - accolto nel loro primo e tanto desiderato tendone – compongono lo spettacolo *Klaxon*. Una vera e propria alchimia tra musica e acrobazie, come gli artisti stessi la definiscono, ci presenta un'esibizione dove gli acrobati si trasformano in musicisti e dove i musicisti provano a prodigarsi in numeri acrobatici. Una compagnia e uno spettacolo flessibile, plastico, vivace e dinamico grazie anche ai ritmi musicali che si abbeverano della tradizione balcanica, russa e tzigana. La presenza del musicista Vladimir, che presenta i numeri in russo, o quella dell'acrobata Antonio, che li traduce "infedelmente" al pubblico in spagnolo, offre un tocco di assurdo e d'interculturalità a uno spettacolo che difende i codici tradizionali del circo e la virtuosità dei suoi artisti. Akoreacro è una



Aurélien Bory & Groupe acrobatique de Tanger – *Azimet* © Agnès Mellon

virtuosity of its artists. Akoreacro is a company that loves the symbols of circus, one that cares for and adores its tent, and one that resembles more closely the ideal of a nomadic life: free and constantly on the move. As Claire herself – co-founder and outstanding acrobat – admitted: “I need to move, I need to meet new people.”

### **Azimet: visions from Sufism**

The extraordinary and visionary show *Azimet*, created by the theatre director and choreographer Aurélien Bory, is the product of a past encounter between the author and a group of acrobats in Tangier, Morocco. This intense encounter – which in 2004 gave birth to the popular show *Taoub* – was with both a family of acrobats spanning seven generations and a rather powerful symbolic and spiritual universe.

The show offers refined and visionary aesthetics. The ensemble of fixed or moving images, played out against the backdrop of a rectangular grid, are reminiscent of a pictorial and photographic process, and display a clear influence derived from the visual arts. It is an entirely theatrical representation – resorting to only some of circus’ conventions – where an ethereal, oniric and

compagnia che ama i simboli del circo, che cura e adora il proprio tendone e che più si avvicina all’ideale di vita nomadica, libera e in movimento. Come ha sottolineato Claire – co-fondatrice della compagnia e acrobata eccezionale – “ho bisogno di muovermi, ho bisogno di incontrare nuova gente”.

### **Azimet. Visioni dal sufismo.**

Lo straordinario e visionario spettacolo *Azimet*, creato dal regista teatrale e coreografo Aurélien Bory, nasce da un suo passato incontro con il gruppo acrobatico di Tangeri, in Marocco. Un incontro profondo – che nel 2004 aveva già dato vita allo spettacolo di successo *Taoub* – con una famiglia di acrobati da sette generazioni e con un universo simbolico e spirituale molto intenso.

Lo spettacolo offre un’estetica raffinata e visionaria. Le composizioni d’immagini fisse o in movimento, sullo sfondo di una griglia rettangolare, ricordano il processo pittorico e fotografico ed hanno una chiara influenza che deriva dalle arti visive. Una rappresentazione totalmente teatrale - che utilizza alcuni codici del circo – all’interno della quale si crea un’atmosfera eterea, onirica e spirituale grazie all’uso eccellente delle luci, dell’illuminazione, delle trasparenze e

UNPACK  
THE  
ARTS

spiritual atmosphere is created thanks to the expert use of lights, lighting, transparencies and darkness. The music taken from the Moroccan Berber tradition – together with the production of wonderful live images – captures the attention as well as the soul of the audience.

*Azimut* – from the Arabic *As-samt*, plural *Sumut* – means ‘paths’ and is a clear reference to the essence of Sufism and the quest for its different spiritual paths. Moreover, ‘Azimut’ is also an astronomical term for the measurement of the angle between the stars and an observer. Aurélien Bory took inspiration from Sidi Ahmed Ou Moussa, a Sufi saint from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, believed to be the patron saint of Moroccan acrobats.

In the author’s words, the show *Azimut* showcases a strong connection with physics, maths, gravity and the idea of space, but there is also a strong resolve to create a spiritual and poetic connection. *Azimut*’s story is for him an epic fight against determinism. Many of the show’s ideas, images and acts occur randomly during the creative process. The search for the essential and the elimination of redundant elements characterise the creative process of Bory and the group of acrobats known as the “Sidi Ahmed Ou Moussa’s children”.

*Azimut*’s opening scene – with the acrobats wrapped in black bags that move vertically up and down the stage space – comes from astronomy and is a reference to the dark areas of the Milky Way, known as Coalsack Nebula. The music and songs featured in the show refer to the mythological character of the *jinn*, the idea of an imaginary spirit, an inner voice. The use of wool in the show is a reference to the origin of the word Sufi, and in one of the scenes the material is used for its wondrous ability to attract light.

*Azimut* becomes a work in conversation with the spiritual roots of Sufism, with astronomy, culture and the Berber rituals, with the celestial universe of maternity, without yielding to any clichés but rather fostering the quest for spiritual paths to share.

dell’oscurità. La musica proveniente dalle tradizioni berbere del Marocco – insieme alla produzione d’immagini vive meravigliose – cattura l’anima e l’attenzione del pubblico.

*Azimut* – dall’arabo *As-samt*, plurale *Sumut* – significa “i cammini” ed è un chiaro riferimento all’essenza del sufismo e alla ricerca dei diversi cammini spirituali. Allo stesso tempo *Azimut* è anche un termine astronomico che misura l’angolo tra gli astri e l’osservatore. Aurélien Bory si è liberamente ispirato alla figura di Sidi Ahmed Ou Moussa, santo sufi del XVI secolo, considerato leggendariamente il santo patrono dell’acrobazia marocchina.

Secondo le parole del regista, nello spettacolo *Azimut* c’è una forte connessione con la fisica, la matematica, la forza di gravità e l’idea di spazio, ma c’è anche una forte volontà di creare una connessione spirituale e poetica. La storia di *Azimut* è per lui una grande battaglia contro il determinismo. Molte delle idee, immagini e numeri presenti nella rappresentazione, avvengono per caso durante il processo creativo. La ricerca dell’essenziale e l’eliminazione degli elementi superflui determinano il processo creativo di Bory e del gruppo acrobatico dei “figli di Sidi Ahmed Ou Moussa”.

La scena iniziale di *Azimut* - con gli acrobati avvolti in dei sacchi neri che si muovono verticalmente sulla scena – viene dall’astronomia e fa riferimento alle zone oscure della Via Lattea, conosciute come Nebulosa Sacco di Carbone. Le musiche e i canti usati nello spettacolo fanno riferimento alla figura mitologica del *jinn*, all’idea di spirito fantastico e di voce interiore. L’uso della lana nello spettacolo fa riferimento all’origine della parola sufi e in una scena della rappresentazione viene usata come un materiale incredibile per la sua capacità di attirare la luce.

*Azimut* diviene un’opera in dialogo con le radici spirituali del sufismo, con l’astronomia, con la cultura e le pratiche rituali berbere, con l’universo celeste della maternità, senza cedere a nessun cliché, ma stimolando la ricerca di cammini esistenziali da condividere.



## Conclusions

The presence of so many intercultural elements and the ongoing experiments and interdisciplinary drift, are therefore typical of the new stages of contemporary circus, and could be fully appreciated also in the latest edition of CIRCa Festival in Auch.

The question of mobility and the continuous transitions between different cultures and countries, influence deeply the character, stimuli and creative influences of the different shows. Complicity, sharing and the ability to train and create whilst moving between different regions become abilities and elements emblematic of and common in the lives of circus artists. Mobility and its impact become therefore an important theme not only in the artistic and creative practices but also in the study and theoretical analysis of abilities and contemporary experiences. A fitting example of this is the project ESCALES – an analysis of mobility of circus students – developed by FEDEC (the European Federation of Professional Circus Schools).

Even the magnificent revamped complex where CIRCa is hosted is in itself a shared space where artists can reside in order to create their shows, rehearse, meet and share their creative process. The residency programme, the accommodation and the rooms created inside this new national pole of circus arts at Auch are part of a wider project supporting the creative process and emerging talent.

These new spaces, ideas and aesthetics are at the service of a contemporary circus where the transition between old and new creative worlds can flourish, and where the art is enriched, above all, through its gripping passage between cultures, disciplines and countries.

## Conclusioni

La presenza di numerosi elementi interculturali e la continua sperimentazione e deriva interdisciplinare, caratterizzano quindi le nuove fasi del circo contemporaneo e si sono potute apprezzare ampiamente anche nell'ultima edizione del CIRCa Festival di Auch.

La questione della mobilità e i continui transiti tra culture e territori diversi, incidono profondamente nel carattere, negli stimoli e nelle influenze creative presenti nei vari spettacoli. La complicità, la condivisione e la capacità di allenarsi e creare spostandosi attraverso luoghi diversi, diventano abilità ed elementi comuni della vita di un artista circense. La mobilità e il suo impatto diventano quindi un tema importante non solo nelle pratiche artistiche e creative, ma anche nello studio e nell'analisi teorica delle competenze e delle esperienze contemporanee. Un esempio, in questo senso, è rappresentato dal progetto ESCALES – un'analisi della mobilità degli studenti di circo - sviluppato da FEDEC (la Federazione Europea di scuole professionali di Circo).

Anche il magnifico complesso restaurato dove si trova CIRCa è di per sé uno spazio di condivisione dove gli artisti possono risiedere per creare i loro spettacoli, provare nella sala di ripetizione, incontrarsi e condividere i loro processi creativi. Gli alloggi e gli spazi di residenza creati all'interno del nuovo polo nazionale delle arti del circo di Auch fanno parte di un più ampio progetto di sostegno alla creazione e ai talenti emergenti.

Nuovi spazi, nuove idee e nuove estetiche al servizio di un circo contemporaneo dove la transizione tra vecchi e nuovi mondi creativi si sviluppa, anche e soprattutto, attraverso il passaggio appassionante tra culture, discipline e territori.

# Tout est bien! (Catastrophe et bouleversement)

**Catastrophe: a paradise  
for six clowns**

**NICO AGUERO**

The last edition of the prestigious CIRC*a* festival, held in the city of Auch, France, hosted the presentation of more than a dozen new circus creations. The programme alternated between shows for performance halls and tents and featured both new and established companies. An example of the latter is the company Pré-O-Coupé and his leader Nikolaus who, after having been featured at the festival his entire career, unveiled his most recent creation, *Tout est bien!* (*Catastrophe et bouleversement*). Here, and for the first time, the juggler, clown and philosopher Nikolaus decided to take his art to that treasured temple of the circus: the big top. Like an ode to the financial crisis, this revolutionary work uses absurd and clownish language to reveal a funny and practical way to cope with the drama despite its weighty critical content.

Come however you can to the tent to see *Tout est bien!* and embark on the adventure of six characters in an absurd world in crisis on the verge of vanishing: our very own.

## **Chronicle of a catastrophic trip to reality**

No sooner do we arrive at the tent of Nikolaus' company Pré-O-Coupé than we get the feeling that something is wrong. Quite unlike the title of the show that we've come to see, not everything seems all right. Viewed from outside, the tent seems to have been hit by some great explosion. Its tarps are dirty, messy and full of holes repaired with tape; even its very shape threatens to implode. In large letters painted up high are the

# Tout est bien! (Catastrophe et bouleversement)

**La catástrofe:  
un paraíso para seis clowns**

**NICO AGUERO**

La última edición del prestigioso festival **CIRC*a***, celebrado en la ciudad francesa de Auch, albergó las presentaciones de más de una decena de nuevas creaciones circenses. La programación osciló entre espectáculos para sala y carpa, así como entre nuevas y ya afianzadas compañías. Este último es el caso de la compañía **Pré-O-Coupé** y su mentor **Nikolaus** que, tras haber realizado toda su carrera acompañado por el festival, presentó su más reciente creación **Tout est bien!** (*Catastrophe et bouleversement*). En esta oportunidad — y por primera vez — el malabarista, clown y filósofo Nikolaus decidió llevar su arte al preciado templo del circo: la carpa. Como una oda a la crisis, en código absurdo y clownesco surge esta revolucionaria obra que, pese a su cargado contenido crítico, desvela una manera cómica y práctica de sobrellevar el drama.

Pasen como puedan a la carpa de *Tout est bien!* (*Catastrophe et bouleversement*) y vean la aventura de estos seis personajes en su absurdo mundo en crisis a punto de desvanecerse: nuestro mundo.

## **Crónica de un catastrófico viaje a la realidad**

Ni bien uno llega al exterior de la carpa de la compañía Pré-O-Coupé / Nikolaus, se tiene el presentimiento de que algo anda mal. A diferencia del título del espectáculo que vinimos a ver, no todo parece estar bien. Desde fuera, esta carpa parece haber sufrido una gran explosión. Sus lonas están sucias, desprolijas y sus agujeros

words *À vendre* ("for sale"), which quickly hints a failure while also insinuating that a crisis has passed. Something is starting to sound familiar. The show starts right here, outside, against the audience's expectations. A sloppy woman with half her teeth missing starts shouting orders at the other characters, who seems to obey her. It looks as if they don't want us to be aware of the chaos they are creating, but such a thing seems impossible. Following the first shock of surprise, the audience starts to break into laughter. A giant runs brutishly around the tent carrying a flag that says *Tout doit disparaître* ("Everything must disappear") and a young man dressed like a woman slides down from the top of the mast and is saved by another man at the last second. The tent is in movement, everything seems to be in danger, the tarps fall and, amidst the tremendous chaos of shouting and disorder, the artists invite us inside.

Upon entering the tent, the picture looks even worse. Every component of the precarious scene seems recycled, coming directly from the rubbish bin: broken wood, sheets of material, benches, beams, tables, chairs, wheels... It's a real disaster in here.

This is how it all begins: like a big burst of energy. And, without quite knowing how, we set off on a trip to a new world that somehow seems familiar to us. The show is an experience unto itself. There is almost no distance between the audience and the artists; it is experienced from within and requires active participation. Many things happen continuously here – sometimes too many. We must pay attention if we want to follow the story. Once inside the tent, there is no way out. The journey is guaranteed.

### **Risk, tension and the impossible: codes of the circus**

The risk is obvious in this world on the verge of vanishing. One false step could lead to the worst. Everything seems to be wired and in constant danger. The fragility of it all is apparent at every turn: a feeling and a situation that fully belongs to the circus. Without risk – or at least tension – you cannot have a circus show. Something has to take a chance: the approach, the artists' prowess,

reparados con cinta; hasta su forma amaga con caerse. En letras bien grandes pintadas sobre lo alto se anuncia: *À vendre* (En venta). Frase que rápidamente nos insinúa un fracaso al tiempo que evidencia el paso de una crisis. Algo nos empieza a sonar familiar. La función comienza ahí mismo, desde fuera, interrumpiendo la espera de los espectadores. Una mujer muy desprolija y con la mitad de sus dientes comienza a pegar gritos dando órdenes al resto de personajes que parecen obedecerle. Al parecer, no quisieran que nos enteremos del caos que están generando, algo que parece más bien imposible. Después del primer shock de sorpresa, el público empieza a soltar las primeras carcajadas. Un gigante corre con movimientos toscos alrededor de la carpa con una bandera que marca *Tout doit disparaître* (todo tiene que desaparecer) y, desde lo alto del mastro, se desliza un joven con vestido de mujer al que otro rescata al límite del accidente. La carpa se mueve mucho, todo corre peligro, las lonas se caen y, en el enorme caos de gritos y descontrol, los artistas nos invitan a pasar.

Al entrar a la carpa el panorama se ve aún peor. Todos los elementos de la precaria escena parecen ser reciclados, venidos directamente del basurero: maderas rotas, chapas, bancos, bigas, mesas, sillas, ruedas... Un verdadero desastre.

Así empieza todo: como una gran explosión de energía y, sin saber cómo, nos introducimos en un viaje a un nuevo universo que de alguna manera nos suena familiar. El espectáculo es en sí una vivencia. No hay casi distancia entre el público y los artistas, se vive desde dentro y requiere de una participación activa. Suceden muchas cosas continuamente en escena y, hasta algunas veces, demasiadas. Para seguir el relato hay que estar presente. Una vez adentro de esta carpa no hay escapatoria, el viaje está asegurado.

### **El riesgo, la tensión y lo imposible: códigos de circo**

El riesgo en este universo a punto de desvanecerse es evidente. Cualquier paso en falso pondría desencadenar lo peor. Todo parece estar atado con alambre y en constante peligro. A cada segundo se vuelve a evidenciar la fragilidad del todo: una sensación y realidad propia del circo.

the context – anything. Here, both the techniques and elements of the circus work towards this goal, which is still real at every moment and keeps our bodies in a state of constant alert. Anybody sitting in the stands could get hit on the head with an anvil, just like in a cartoon. In this chaos, everything is possible.

The disciplines chosen also contribute to this constant tension. The great variety and instances of balance, contrasted with this unbalanced context, strengthen the work and create the empathy necessary for believing in the artists: a man spends long minutes turning with a ball balanced on his head, oblivious to everything around him; an equilibrist wanders around the stage as if on stilts, but walking on his hands (using hand balance in a surprising way) and moves among the audience, grazing their heads; for want of a trapeze, an old staircase serves as such and, judging by its noise, could come apart at any moment, unleashing catastrophe; and if that were not enough, one of the artists uses the flying rope to fly over the heads of the audience with no security and keeps moving right through the tarp of the tent. The tension is palpable, takes form and stays with us. On this tightrope between the unreal and the true, the staging of *Tout est bien!* seems like the right choice to show that the impossible is possible.

### **The creation and its stars**

Through its endless forms, contemporary circus has been reinventing itself for decades. Like a good child of the traditional circus, it seeks to differentiate itself from its parent and in *Tout est bien!*, the result is magnificent. Nikolaus is the guide on this adventure, presented at the 26<sup>th</sup> edition of the CIRCa contemporary circus festival in Auch, France. This creator of German origin has been working in the circus world for more than twenty years and is considered one of the exponents and precursors of this new wave of contemporary circus in cooperation with large companies like Archaos and Cirque Baroque. His training started with philosophy, a discipline that is notable in his work, though one fine day he decided to set his books aside to philosophise with the body through the language of circus techniques. After graduating from the renowned

Sin riesgo —o, por lo menos, tensión— un espectáculo de circo no se sostiene. Algo tiene que ser arriesgado: la propuesta, las proezas, el contexto o lo que sea. Aquí, tanto las técnicas de circo como los elementos se ponen al servicio de esa búsqueda que, sin embargo, es realidad en todo momento y mantiene al cuerpo en situación de alerta constante. A cualquier vecino de las gradas le puede caer un yunque en la cabeza, como en los dibujos animados. En este caos todo es posible.

Las disciplinas elegidas se ponen también a disposición de esta tensión constante. La gran variedad y cantidad de equilibrios contrastando con este desequilibrado contexto refuerza la obra y genera la empatía necesaria para creer en sus protagonistas. Largos minutos de un hombre girando con una pelota equilibrada en la cabeza, mientras a su alrededor pasa de todo. Un paradista de manos se pasea por la escena como con zancos pero en las manos (utilizando los pulls de una manera sorprendente) y se introduce en el público rozando sus cabezas. A falta de trapezio, una vieja escalera oficia de tal y, a juzgar por sus ruidos, puede desarmarse en cualquier momento desatando una catástrofe. Y como si fuera poco, desde la cuerda volante uno de los artistas sobrevuela al público sin seguridad y traspasa volando la lona de la carpa. La tensión se vuelve palpable, cobra forma y nos acompaña. En ese hilo tirante entre lo irreal y lo verídico, la puesta en escena de *Tout est bien!* parece la justa elección para demostrar que lo imposible es posible.

### **La creación y sus protagonistas**

El circo contemporáneo, a través de sus infinitas formas, lleva décadas reinventándose. Como buen hijo del circo tradicional busca diferenciarse de su padre y en *Tout est bien!* el resultado es grandioso. Nikolaus es el mentor de esta aventura que tuvo oportunidad de presentarse en la 26<sup>o</sup> edición del Festival de circo actual CIRCa de la ciudad de Auch. Este particular creador de origen alemán viene trabajando desde hace más de dos décadas en el terreno circense y es considerado uno de los protagonistas y precursor de esta nueva ola de circo contemporáneo colaborando con grandes compañías como Archaos y Cirque Baroque. Su formación



Cie Pré-O-Coupé / Nikolaus – *Tout est bien ! Catastrophe et bouleversement* © MartinWagenhan

Centre National des Arts du Cirque (CNAC) in Châlons-en-Champagne, he set out on a tireless career that has occupied him to the present day.

With a few productions as both an artist and a director under his belt, Nikolaus fell in with some good companies and managed to form a trustworthy technical and artistic team of the stature shown in *Tout est bien!*, a project that Nikolaus has had in mind for the last seven years. Christian Lucas, the former artistic co-director of CIRCa, was responsible for staging this new circus concept. Lucas had a very successful career working as a director with different companies in France and assumed the same role for earlier shows of the Pré-O-Coupé company. To fill the ring, Nikolaus brought together a team of multidisciplinary artists with solid training and varied experience. The artists starring in this chaotic world alongside Nikolaus (a clown and juggler in the show) are Julien Cramillet on the cloudswing and accordion; Noémie Armbruster, who uses an old broken staircase as a trapeze and acts as the leader in this great disaster with a singular sense of humour and a remarkable voice;

comenzó desde la filosofía —disciplina muy presente en su trabajo— aunque un buen día decidió dejar de lado los libros para filosofar desde el cuerpo introduciendo el lenguaje de las técnicas del circo. Así fue que se graduó en el reconocido Centre National des Arts du Cirque (CNAC) en Châlons-en-Champagne y comenzó una incansable carrera hasta el día de hoy.

Con unas cuantas producciones tanto como intérprete y como director en su mochila, Nikolaus volvió a hacerse de buenas compañías y logró conformar un equipo técnico y artístico de confianza. Un equipo a la medida de *Tout est bien!*, un proyecto que Nikolaus tenía en mente desde hacía 7 años. Christian Lucas, ex codirector artístico de CIRCa, fue el responsable de la puesta en escena de este nuevo universo circense. Lucas desarrolló una gran carrera como director trabajando para diferentes compañías de Francia y ha desempeñado este mismo rol en anteriores obras de la compañía Pré-O-Coupé. Para ocupar la pista, Nikolaus procuró juntar un equipo de artistas multidisciplinarios con una fuerte formación y variada experiencia. Los

the young equilibrist Mathieu Hedan, nicknamed 'the son', who surprises audiences with his fantastic hand-walking technique; and Karim Malhas and Yannos Chassignol, acrobats and clowns whose act achieves active participation from the public, which is indispensable for entering into their world.

### **Out of place: the proper aesthetics of a catastrophe**

Aesthetics is of vital importance in all aspects of this show. Every object used seems to come from some hill of rubbish or trash container, but also, almost miraculously, it manages to fulfil its role. It is as if the starting point was to place all these elements exactly where they don't belong to show how fragile the constructions are and to promote a feeling of constant tension.

In the ring, the scene is made of precarious tables, benches and plates stacked any which-way. Atop this imbalance, an equilibrist puts his life in danger, something that undoubtedly was no simple matter during rehearsal. The set design, costumes and lighting all work towards the sloppy precariousness in which the characters live. The central role of these elements is essential. With the help of Benjamín Fanni and Jean-Baptiste Hardoin, set designer Raymond Sarti met this challenge by creating an eminently expressive and transformable space. The lighting was designed by Hervé Gary, who took everyday elements and successfully inserted them in a natural way. And Fanny Mandonnet, the costume designer, also used recycled materials and ill-fitting clothing to make it seem like the characters had dressed in the dark.

The music also played a fundamental role. Much of it was performed live by the artists themselves, with the help of composer Olivier Manoury. The aesthetic efforts in *Tout est bien!* stand out for the total verisimilitude attained through the joint work of a team that knew how to put everything out of its usual place of meaning.

### **The circus of the absurd: a way to criticise us**

From the mouth of the most foolish and clumsy character (played by Nikolaus), come deep

artistas que protagonizan este caótico mundo acompañando a Nikolaus (clown y malabarista sobre la escena) son Julien Cramillet en cuerda volante y acordeón; Noémie Armbruster, quien hace las veces de trapeceista sobre una vieja escalera derruida y oficia de líder de este gran desastre con un humor único y una destacable voz; el joven equilibrista Mathieu Hedan, al que bautizan como "el hijo", sorprende con su enorme técnica de parada de manos y Karim Malhas y Yannos Chassignol, acróbatas y clowns, llevan adelante un número que logra una participación activa del público, algo indispensable para entrar en su universo.

### **Fuera de lugar: la justa estética de una catástrofe**

La estética tiene una vital importancia en todos los aspectos de esta obra. Todo lo utilizado parece venido directamente de alguna montaña de basura o algún contenedor. Objetos que, de manera casi milagrosa, logran cumplir su función. Pareciera que el punto de partida fue poner todos esos elementos precisamente en donde no tienen que ir para evidenciar la fragilidad de las construcciones contagiando una sensación de constante tensión.

Sobre la pista, el escenario está hecho de precarias tablas, bancos y planchas apiladas como pueden. Sobre ese desequilibrio, un equilibrista pone en juego su vida, algo que —eso seguro— no fue tarea fácil durante la preparación. Tanto la escenografía como el vestuario y las luces trabajan en pos de esa desproliza precariedad en la que viven sus personajes. El protagonismo de estos elementos es clave. El escenógrafo Raymond Sarti, con la ayuda de Benjamín Fanni y Jean Baptiste Hardoin, llevaron adelante este desafío creando un espacio sumamente expresivo y transformable. La concepción de luces estuvo a cargo de Hervé Gary, quien utilizó elementos cotidianos logrando introducirlos en la naturaleza de la escena. Por su parte, Fanny Mandonnet, creadora de los vestuarios, se sirvió también de material reciclado e incómodas prendas para caracterizar a los personajes que parecían haberse puesto la ropa a ciegas.

thoughts that creep into the text in the form of comic monologues. Absurd humour is at the heart and soul of this show. The surreal scenes seem distanced from reality, and yet he subtly and fully reveals this reality as he goes deeper into his discourse. The critique of capitalism and the world today is not lost on anybody. A lot of rubbish is stirred around (and tossed out, really!) during the nearly two-hour show. Here, new lives are invented for the obsolete objects of our consumerist world. This company shows us how useful things can be that we consider useless. And how, with what we have, we can do much more than what we imagine. A lot of all this seems to spring from Nikolaus' philosophy and, if we take existentialist principles as a base, we could say that the dramaturgy of *Tout est bien!* comfortably fits in with the old theatre of the absurd. As they arise, the incoherent scenes seem to belong to a post-war atmosphere (in this case, the wake of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century crisis), but they are shaped by key elements such as repeated dialogue, surreal environments, the characters' great trouble in relating to each other, abuse of power, and moments of irrationality. Each moment that passes in *Tout est bien!* makes us feel more at home in this great circus of the absurd that focuses on criticising human beings and their systems.

### **Among us all: *Tout est bien!***

The crisis in this show seems to have just ended and apparently the consequences still lie close to the surface. Everything has been turned upside down, we live with the remains of what once was, and it nevertheless seems that we have no other choice but to push on ahead. This team's first great accomplishment is its construction and implementation of a collective machinery in which the characters' every act is essential for the next act to work – until the whole thing reaches a glamorous finish (in its own way).

As best as they can with what they have, these artists fill the ring with a show chock full of funny and incoherent situations. It seems like the nearly miraculous force that makes it all possible is the union of the artists (and us) which keeps the show going on somehow. This, perhaps, is one of the most important legacies of *Tout est bien!*: a

La música también cumplió un rol fundamental. Una gran parte fue interpretada en vivo por los propios protagonistas, que contaron con la colaboración del compositor Olivier Manoury. El trabajo estético en *Tout est bien!* se destaca por la completa verisimilitud alcanzada por el trabajo conjunto de un equipo que supo poner todos los significantes fuera de lugar.

### **El circo de lo absurdo: una manera de criticarnos**

De la boca del más tonto y torpe de todos los personajes (el que interpreta Nikolaus) salen reflexiones profundas que se deslizan en el texto en forma de cómicos monólogos. El humor absurdo es pieza clave y alma de esta obra. Las superrealistas escenas parecen alejarse de la realidad, sin embargo, con sutileza la destapa por completo profundizando en el discurso. La crítica al capitalismo y al mundo de hoy en día no se le escapa a nadie. Mucha basura se revuelve (y se arroja, ¡de verdad!) durante las casi dos horas de espectáculo. La obsoleta vida de los objetos en nuestro mundo consumista aquí, se reinventa. Esta compañía nos demuestra lo útil que puede ser lo que creemos inútil y cómo con lo que tenemos ya podríamos hacer mucho más de lo que imaginamos. Mucho parece haber de la filosofía de Nikolaus en todo esto y, si nos basáramos en principios existencialistas, podríamos decir que la dramaturgia de *Tout est bien!* formaría cómodamente parte de la vieja corriente del teatro del absurdo. En su momento, las incoherentes escenas nacían de una post-guerra —aquí sería una postcrisis siglo XXI— pero se nutre de elementos claves como la repetición de diálogos, ambientes surrealistas, una gran dificultad de los personajes para relacionarse, hay abuso de poder e ilógicos momentos. A cada minuto que pasa en *Tout est bien!* uno se siente más parte de este gran circo del absurdo que concentra sus significantes en criticar al ser humano y su propio sistema.

### **Entre todos: *Tout est bien!***

La crisis en esta obra parece haber pasado hace nada y las consecuencias se viven a flor de piel. Todo está patas para arriba, vivimos en los restos de lo que pasó y sin embargo parece no quedar otra alternativa que seguir adelante. La primer

positive outlook, or at least one that lets us glimpse a way out of our current and future situation, a way out of a world that lies completely in ruin. Who knows? Maybe we should all turn into clowns so we can somehow pull ourselves out of it.

gran proeza de este equipo es la construcción y puesta en funcionamiento de una maquina colectiva, donde cada acción de los personajes es clave para el funcionamiento de la siguiente terminando con un glamuroso final (a su manera).

Como pueden y con lo que tienen, estos artistas llevan a la pista un espectáculo con todas las letras y repleto de situaciones cómicas e incoherentes. Parece que la fuerza casi milagrosa que hace esto posible es la unión de ellos (y nosotros) para no bajar los brazos y organizarse para que de alguna forma el show continúe. Ese, posiblemente, sea uno de los importantes legados de Tout es bien! Una mirada positiva o, por lo menos, que nos permite vislumbrar una manera de sortear la situación presente y futura de este mundo completamente en ruinas. Quién sabe. A lo mejor nos deberíamos transformar todos en clowns para que esto de alguna manera salga a flote.



# “It isn't good. But it's all right.”

PETRA ŽIŠT

In the park, in front of the venue, a small electric car quietly takes away the trash. People are strolling around or engaging in leisure activities along the banks of the river Gers, on which tents are erected here and there. Big, circus tents. A child is doing a handstand against the wall of the movie theatre. Somewhere in the background, across the bridge, under St. Mary's Cathedral, there are quiet sounds of the carnival parade. Colourful young people are standing in a circle in front of the old stables, chatting and throwing balls in the air – juggling. Some people are sitting down on the warm paved ground in front of the colourful facade of the former army barracks, catching the sunrays of the late October. They are upright people, with determined, but not conceited footsteps. Healthy, strong bodies, which perform something together in the courtyard. Warm fall weather, still permitting the view of uncovered skin, and revealing bruised legs, swathed wrists, bandaged arms...

The 26<sup>th</sup> Festival of Contemporary Circus CIRCa in Auch (pronounced Aush) – an otherwise quiet little town of some 20,000 people situated in southwest France by the Pyrenees, 77 km from Toulouse – is at its peak. This year it is extra special as some of the activities take place in the new and renovated space of a former military stables in which Le CIRC (the Circus Innovation and Research Centre) was established as a permanent space to promote, research, and create circus arts (as well as theatre, dance, and music). The new facilities also provide the work and living space for artists during their residencies, with an up-to-date, outstandingly well-technologically-equipped studio, as well as the Dôme de Gascogne, a permanent tent with a moveable roof (a venue in which a mobile tent could be erected if needed, since tents in the circus, or circus in tents, still holds a special status even today). The festival is also special since the

# »Ni dobro. Ampak je v redu.«

PETRA ŽIŠT

V parku pred prizoriščem majhen električni avtomobilček v sončnem jutru tiho odvažata smeti. Ljudje se sprehajajo ali rekreirajo ob obrežju reke Gers, vzdolž katere so tu in tam postavljeni šotori. Veliki, cirkuški šotori. Otok ob steno kinematografa dela stojijo. Nekje v ozadju, onkraj mostu, pod katedralo svete Marije, se sliši pritajena karnevalska glasba povorke. Pred staro konjušnico stojijo v krogu pisani mladi in med pogovorom mečejo žogice v zrak – žonglirajo. Nekateri posedajo po toplih tlakovanih tleh pred pisanim pročeljem nekdanje vojašnice in lovijo sončne žarke poznega oktobra. Pokončni ljudje, z odločnimi a ne prevzetnimi koraki. Zdrava močna telesa, ki nekaj skupaj izvajajo na dvorišču. Toplo jesensko vreme, ki še dovoljuje poglede odkrite kože, razkriva modrice na nogah, povita zapestja, povezane roke ...

26. festival sodobnega cirkusa CIRCa v Auchu (izg. Oš), sicer mimem mestecu z nekaj več kot 20.000 prebivalci, ki leži na jugozahodu Francije ob Pirenejih 77 kilometrov oddaljenem od Toulousea, je na vrhuncu. Letos je še prav poseben zato, ker del dogajanja prvič poteka v novih in prenovljenih prostorih nekdanje vojaške konjušnice, kjer je CIRC (Circus Innovation and Research Centre) dobil svoje stalne prostore za promoviranje, raziskovanje in ustvarjanje cirkuških umetnosti (a tudi gledališča, plesa in glasbe) skupaj z delovnimi in bivalnimi prostori, ki jih nudijo umetnikom v času njihovih residenc, s sodobno izjemno dobro tehnično opremljeno dvorano in kupolo Dôme de Gascogne, stalnim šotorom s premično streho, v katero je mogoče postaviti tudi premični šotor, če je treba, ker šotor v cirkusu ali cirkus v šotoru še danes zavzema poseben status. Poseben pa je festival tudi zato, ker ostali del dogajanja in predstav letos predstavljajo pod osmimi šotori, ki so jih postavili vzdolž mestne reke ter tako reki Gers podelili nalogo povezovalke prizorišč, jo izpostavili in postavili na ogled, v uporabo. Res je,

rest of this year's happenings and performances are presented under the eight tents erected alongside the river that traverses the town, making the Gers the link between the stages and a visible, well-used focal point. It is true that other similar festivals across Europe use tents considerably less, but the director of CIRCa Festival, Marc Fouilland, says that the choice of tents was a political action: "Since the circus artists have been exiled from the town, from the centre to the outskirts, we wanted to put them back in the centre, and namely in a tent. The circus has the right to be in the centre of the town." In the previous years the circus performances had been scattered through the centre of the town, but the organisers hope that the placement next to the river will somewhat help the festival to be more ecological, since it is now possible to visit it on foot or on bike. The Centre for Circus Arts likes to present itself as ecologically aware, for example by choosing special materials that use less energy; they already collect energy using solar cells, and collect rainwater, but they say that there is plenty more to be done in that direction.

The festival's accompanying programme is rich. Aside from the professional performances there's a number of circus films, a parade, an open stage, concerts, workshops for beginners and children, exhibitions, meetings with the artists, and Radio CIRCa broadcasts (put out during the festival to spread information, interview artists, collect the impressions of the spectators, and play music). There's also a festival bookshop where one can find most of the works on contemporary circus. Of these there are a great many – from practical advice for jugglers, acrobats, and others, to theoretical discussions, fiction about circus, and a book of recipes that tells you what a clown eats.

The festival visitors, who outnumber the inhabitants of Auch, are a very mixed audience: from children and members of circus schools, to young, older, and experienced masters of circus arts, to ordinary enthusiasts of this art, critics, and, finally, the professional representatives of other festivals, who see CIRCa mainly as an exhibition space for performances that can be programmed at future events. In France children and young people can pick circus arts as an

da na drugih podobnih festivalih po Evropi veliko manj uporabljajo šotore, a direktor festivala CIRCa, Marc Fouilland, pravi, da je bila izbira šotorov politično dejanje: »Ker so bili cirkuški umetniki izgnani iz mesta, iz centra na obrobje, smo jih spet želeli postaviti v središče, in to v šotoru. Cirkus ima pravico biti v središču mesta.« Prejšnja leta je bil festival razpršen v mestnem središču, organizatorji pa upajo, da s postavitvijo ob reki nekoliko pripomorejo k ekološkosti festivala, ki se ga da obiskovati peš ali na kolesu. Center za cirkuške umetnosti se tudi sicer rad predstavlja kot ekološko ozaveščen, na primer z izbiro posebnih energetske nizkoporabnih materialov, zbirajo sončne celice, zbirajo deževno vodo, a še vedno lahko marsikaj postorijo v tej smeri, pravijo.

Spremljevalni program festivala je bogat. Tvorijo ga kino in filmi povezani s cirkusom, parada, odprta scena, koncerti, delavnice za začetnike in otroke, razstave, srečanja z umetniki, v času festivala oddaja radio CIRCa, kjer širijo informacije, intervjuvajo umetnike, zbirajo vtise gledalcev, vrtijo glasbo), prisotna pa sta tudi festivalska trgovina in knjigarna, kjer se lahko najdemo večino del o sodobnem cirkusu, in teh res ni malo: od praktičnih nasvetov za žonglerje, akrobate in druge, do teoretskih razprav, fikcije o cirkusu, do knjige receptov, iz katere izvemo, kaj je klovn.

Obiskovalci festivala, ki jih je več kot samih prebivalcev Auch, so zelo mešana publika: od otrok, članov cirkuških šol, do mladih, starejših in starih mačkov cirkuške umetnosti, navadnih navdušencev nad to umetnostjo, kritikov, profesionalnih predstavnikov festivalov, ki festival dojemajo predvsem kot razstavišče predstav, iz katerih bodo izbrali nekaj za svoj prihodnji festival. V Franciji otroci in mladi izbirajo cirkuške dejavnosti kot organizirane obšolske dejavnosti, kjer se skozi cirkus učijo ne samo fizičnih, ampak tudi socialnih spretnosti. Vsi pa imajo nekaj skupnega – pripravljani so plačati vstopnice do 20 evrov, da bi videli najsodobnejše, kar ima sodobni cirkus ponuditi. Ko Francozi govorijo o cirkusu, govorijo o cirkuški umetnosti in govorijo s strastjo, zvenijo, kot da bi govorili o najresnejši stvari, resnejši od politike (saj je tudi ta včasih bolj komična od cirkusa, mar ne?). Ko Francozi govorijo o cirkusu, govorijo kot da bi predavali,



Akoreacro – Klaxon © Niels Benoist

organised extracurricular activity – one where they learn not only physical but also social skills through the training. The CIRCa audiences all have something in common though – they are willing to pay up to 20 Euros for a ticket to see the most modern takes on what the contemporary circus has to offer. When the French talk about circus, they talk about circus art. They talk about it with passion, and they sound like they are discussing the most serious topic, more serious than politics (which sometimes is more comical than circus, isn't it?). When the French talk about circus, they talk as though they are lecturing, philosophising, and they weave the most compelling theories around circus. In conversations they discuss the performances they've seen, the well-known groups; they read reviews and critiques in the main daily papers, and refer to circus performers as artists and interact with them in such a way. And their large eyes shine brightly as though they themselves were children who time and again discover something new and wondrous in this world, constantly reaffirming that "circus is not a spectacle; it is a life experience, a way to travel through our own lives".

filozofirali, okrog cirkusa spletajo najprepričljivejše teorije, med pogovori razpravljajo o videnih predstavah, o poznanih skupinah, o njih berejo recenzije in kritike v osrednjih dnevnikih, časopisih, cirkusante imenujejo umetnike in se do njih tako tudi vedejo. Le-tem pa se velike oči svetijo kot bi bili otroci, ki vedno znova odkrijejo nekaj novega v tem svetu, in se čudijo ter venomer potrjujejo, da »Cirkus ni spektakel, je življenjska izkušnja, način potovanja v našem lastnem življenju.«

Cirkus v Franciji ima seveda poseben status, edinstveni v svetu, kjer gre za luksuzno verzijo sodobnega cirkusa, bi lahko rekli. V Franciji s pomočjo državne podpore danes obstaja več kot 500 mladinskih, 6 pripravljalnih in 3 visoke šole cirkusa, več kot 450 cirkuških skupin in 250 festivalov, ki v svoj program vključujejo cirkus. Cirkuški sektor je močan in dobro razvit ter podprt s strani države. V Franciji so razviti vsi od petih stebrov v umetnosti: izobraževanje, ustvarjanje, produkcija, distribucija in dokumentacija.

Kar ni preveč presenetljivo, saj se je v začetku sedemdesetih najprej v Franciji, potem pa še drugod, pojavil novi cirkus, ko je tradicionalni

Of course circus has a special status in France, unique in the world; we could say that it is a luxury version of contemporary circus there. With the help of state subvention, in France today there are over 500 junior, six preparatory, and three higher education circus schools, over 450 circus companies, and 250 festivals including circus in their programmes. The circus sector is strong and well developed, and the state supports it. All of the five pillars of art are developed in France: education, creation, production, distribution, and documentation.

Which is not overly surprising, since the new circus appeared first in France – and later elsewhere – after the traditional circus started to become less popular with audiences who were ever more concerned over animal rights. New circus was a movement that incorporated theatrical ideas of dramaturgy, and that introduced realism (with the use of everyday objects) and social reflection, but one that was still as attached as was the traditional circus to the idea of exploration and experimentation in the search for an ideal, nomadic way of life, to the love of freedom and the search for risk, and to the preservation of juggling and acrobatic techniques. It began in the 70s when street artists visited the traditional circuses to learn their circus secrets...

Today it is difficult to define the contemporary circus, since it is multidisciplinary and constantly rediscovering its own language, forms and aesthetics. Today's contemporary circus is interconnected and inclusive of other arts such as dance, theatre, music, video, architecture, visual arts, new media, etcetera, and it is precisely because of this that the circus is very innovative, always searching for new ways of expression, and new ways of using objects and the body. In such a way it can move on the borders of several arts, and nowadays it is common to ask whether something is or is not circus. But the circus artists themselves do not limit their work; they exceed boundaries and combine different arts. Marc Fouilland, the artistic director of CIRCa, thinks that the question whether something is or is not circus points only to the fact that the circus is free and always alive. The question 'Is this circus?' is interesting, since the artists play with the

cirkus začel doživljati manjšo priljubljenost pri občinstvu, ki so ga vedno bolj začele skrbeti pravice živali. To je bilo gibanje, ki je vključevalo gledališke vidike dramaturgije, vpeljalo je realizem (z rabo vsakdanjih predmetov) in družbeno refleksijo, a se je še vedno navezovalo na raziskovanje in eksperimentiranje v iskanju idealnega, nomadskega načina življenja, svobode, ohranilo tehnike žongliranja, akrobatike, iskanja tveganja, kot njegov predhodnik. V sedemdesetih so ulični performerji obiskovali tradicionalne cirkuse, da bi se od njih učili cirkuških skrivnosti ...

Sodobni cirkus je težko definirati, ker je večdisciplinaren in nenehno znova odkriva svoj jezik, svoje oblike in estetiko. Sodobni cirkus se danes povezuje in vključuje druge umetnosti, ples, gledališče, glasbo, video, arhitekturo, vizualne umetnosti, nove medije itn. Ravno zaradi tega je danes cirkus zelo inovativen, saj išče nove načine izražanja, rabe telesa in predmetov. Tako se lahko giblje na mejah več umetnosti, zato se danes pogosto postavlja vprašanje, ali je nekaj cirkus ali ni. A cirkuški umetniki kot performerji se pri delu ne omejujejo, presegajo meje in združujejo različna področja. Marc Fouilland, umetniški direktor CIRCe, meni, da vprašanje, ali nekaj je cirkus ali ni, zgolj kaže na to, da je cirkus svoboden in vedno živ. Vprašanje, 'ali je to cirkus' pa je zanimivo, saj se umetniki igrajo z mejami in omejitvami ter izprašujejo institucijo samo. Kot na drugih umetniških področjih lahko tudi v cirkusu opazimo znatno eksperimentiranje, raziskovanje.

Poznavalci cirkusa radi dajejo primere z drugimi umetnostmi. Govorijo na primer o učenju cirkuških disciplin, kot se nekdo uči v umetniški šoli slikarstva. »Tudi slikanje ni samo o barvah,« pravi Tim Roberts, predsednik FEDEC, Evropske federacije profesionalnih cirkuških šol, »Največji problem, s katerim se moramo soočiti, je, da ljudje kažejo na nas in pravijo: To ni cirkus. Nihče pa ne reče, to ni knjiga, to ni glasba.« Ne smemo pozabiti, kako je cirkus bil dolgi boj, da so ga prepoznali kot cirkuške umetnosti. Tim Roberts pravi, da »to ni bil boj za to, da bi bili drugačni, ampak da bi bili enaki« z drugimi umetnostmi. Drugi problem, s katerim se morajo soočiti danes, so miti, pravi Tim Roberts: »Vedno se moramo soočiti z miti. Miti so naš največji

boundaries and limits as well as examine the institution itself. In the circus as well, as in the other artistic fields, we can observe substantial experimentation and exploration.

The circus connoisseurs like to give examples using other artforms. For instance, they talk about learning the circus disciplines as an artist learns to paint. "Painting is not about colours only," says Tim Roberts, president of FEDEC, the European Federation of Professional Circus Schools. "The biggest problem we have to face is people pointing at us, saying that this is not circus. But nobody says that something is not a book, or music." We must not forget how the circus fought the long battle to be recognised as circus arts. Tim Roberts says that "this was not a battle to be different, but the same as other arts". The second problem that they have to face today is the myths that surround circus. "We always have to face the myths," says Tim Roberts. "Myths are our largest problem." One of these is the traditional circus heritage. "It's like when you want to talk about music; you don't have to always go back to talk about Mozart and Beethoven," says Marc Fouilland. You could also say that there has been a kind of democratisation of circus; today there are no secrets. "We share everything," says Tim Roberts. "In the past it was believed that recording video was a danger because somebody could steal your work. Today artists post things to the Internet to prove to the whole world that they were there first. If you want to be better, you have to give more of yourself; you have to always do more. There are no more secrets."

And how do the actual performances look? What can circus offer today, and how can it be current, reflective and critical in a time of crisis when clowning around itself seems so completely superfluous? How to tell funny stories in a world that is in crisis and is not funny? The performance *Tout est bien! Catastrophe et bouleversement* ('Everything is all right! Disaster and upheaval') by Cie Pré-O-Coupé and Nikolaus, where everything is falling apart and nothing works as it should, tells us how relevant the circus can be today. The costumes are improvisatory; the artists wear whatever is to hand, and the outfits do not exactly fit those who wear them – they are simply what's

problem.« Eden teh je dediščina tradicionalnega cirkusa. »Podobno je, če želiš razpravljati o glasbi, ti ni treba nazaj in razpravljati o Mozartu, Beethovnu,« pravi Marc Fouilland.

Lahko bi rekli, da je prišlo do neke vrste demokratizacije cirkusa tudi v tem, da danes ni nobenih skrivnosti, »ker vse delimo,« kot pravi Tim Roberts. »Nekoč je veljalo, da s snemanjem obstaja nevarnost, da bo nekdo ukradel tvoje delo. Danes pa dajemo posnetke na internet, kot dokaz, da ves svet vidi, da si bil prvi. Če želiš biti boljši, moraš dati več od sebe, narediti moraš več in vedno več. Nobenih skrivnosti ni več.«

Kakšne pa so konkretne predstave in kaj lahko ponudi cirkus danes, kako je lahko aktualen, koliko refleksiven, koliko kritičen in kaj lahko ponudi v času krize, ko se zdi vsakršno zganjanje cirkusa še kako odveč? Kako pripovedovati smešne zgodbe v svetu, ki je v krizi in ni smešen? O tem, kako aktualen je lahko cirkus danes, govori predstava *Tout est bien! Catastrophe et bouleversement* (Vse je v redu! Katstrofa in prevrat) kolektiva Cie Pré-O-Coupé in Nikolausa, v kateri vse razpada, nič ne deluje kot je treba. Kostumi so improvizirani, izbrani na prvo žogo in ne sodijo ravno k tistim, ki jih nosijo, nosijo to, kar je pač ostalo. Ravnotežje je potrebno loviti na majavih šolskih klopeh, naloženih druga na drugo. Kot trapez služi lestev. Tu so še sodi, deske in glave drugih, ki jih lahko uporabimo, ko vse razpada, ko nič več ni na voljo. Klovnov nos je iz stekleničnega zamaška, njegov klobuk je plastična posoda, navešen je s selotejpom in plastiko. Na trenutek so podobe tega, kar lahko nastane iz takega kombiniranja recikliranih predmetov že groteskne. Šotor razpada, prodajajo ga, koreografija se ne posreči. Vse je v transformiranju, vse je na razprodaji. Izvajalci na odru se trudijo iz nečesa, kar razpada, ustvariti največ. Preizkušajo nove materiale, ker se njihov materialni svet cirkusa krči, zato pa so inovativni. Reciklirajo, prenovijo, dodelajo, vse z veliko domišljije skušajo stvari držati skupaj. Da bi nadaljevali oder, po katerem akrobat hodi po rokah na podstavkih, morajo premikati lesene deske iz ozadja v ospredje in tako podaljševati oder. Gledalce med predstavo premeščajo, kot da ne bi prej preračunali nevarnosti in tveganja, ko zračni akrobat nad njimi niha na vrvi. Akrobati,

leftover. One artist must balance on rickety school benches piled on top of each other. A ladder serves as a trapeze. Barrels, boards and the heads of people are also used in the performance when everything falls apart, when nothing is available any more. The clown's nose is made out of a bottle cap, and his hat is a plastic bowl held together with Scotch tape. For a moment the images that have been created from these recycled objects are almost grotesque. The tent is falling apart and the company are selling it; the choreography does not work out. Everything is transforming, everything is on sale. The performers on the stage are trying to create as much as possible out of something that is falling apart. The material world of their circus is shrinking – so they test out new materials, they innovate. They recycle, refurbish, elaborate everything with a lot of imagination; they try to hold things together. To continue the scene in which an acrobat walks on his hands from one pedestal to the next, they have to move wooden boards from the back of the stage to the front in order to lengthen it. During the performance they move the spectators around, as though they hadn't calculated the danger and risk beforehand, while an aerial acrobat swings on a rope above them. Acrobats, trapeze artists, equilibrists, jugglers – six artists mastering all the disciplines. In spite of the poverty in which this family of artists lives on stage, they put in a supreme effort to perform their art and acrobatics. At times they are truly unbelievably successful, and all of a sudden they create something unusually beautiful, unbelievably amusing from all the ugliness – just as if they had performed a miracle.

On the one hand we could read the performance as a reference to the old circus, which is falling apart. The new one takes ideas from improvisation and other resourceful arts, and it is thrifty. On the other hand it is about the question of how to again establish what is falling apart in the real world. The precariousness of the balance in circus reminds one of the precariousness of today's world. "In the fragile, precarious, uncertain, and dangerous world it is the very essence of circus that sublimates its attributes into beauty. Nothing is more precarious than balancing on one hand. Nothing is more dangerous than an artist swinging on trapeze; and

trapezisti, ekvilibristi, žonglerji - šest umetnikov obvlada vse discipline. Četudi igralska družina na odru živi revno, se maksimalno potrudijo, da izvedejo svojo umetnost in akrobacije. Včasih jim resnično neverjetno uspeva in naenkrat iz vsega grdega ustvarijo nekaj nenavadno lepega, neverjetno zabavnega, kot bi naredili čudež.

Na eni strani lahko predstavo beremo kot referenco na stari cirkus, ki razpada. Novi jemlje ideje iz improvizacije in danosti, ter je boren. Po drugi strani pa gre za vprašanje, kako spet vzpostaviti to, kar propada v dejanskem svetu. Prekernost ravnotežja v cirkusu spominja na prekernost sveta danes. »V krhkem, prekerem, negotovem in nevarnem svetu, je sama esenca cirkusa tista, ki svoje attribute sublimira v lepoto. Nič ni bolj prekernega kot ravnotežje na eni roki. Nič ni bolj nevarnega kot nihajoči na trapezu, ki bo povrh še naredil luknjo v šotorsko streho nad publiko ... in izginil v nočno nebo. Nič bolj ganljivega kot entuziazem klovn v brezizhodnem položaju ...« (Nikolaus) V svetovni kriz vse razpada. Kako ohraniti ravnotežje v popolnoma zmešanem, premešanem, pretresenem svetu? Od časa do časa spektakel izstopi iz svojega polja in zajame sodobni svet ter obsodi njegove socialne in ekonomske krivice, govori o nepravični distribuciji bogastva ter nas vabi k ogorčenju. Klovn filozof Nikolaus, ki je žongler, a ne kot drugi, rad meša filozofijo in sodobni cirkus za prevetritev (in preureditev) ustaljenega reda. Nikolausu, ki se na odru (v resničnem svetu je, preden se je podal v svet cirkusa, študiral filozofijo na Univerzi v Kölnu) navidezno naključno in po pomoti postavi v vlogo filozofa, ker mu ta vloga ni bila dodeljena, ker ga imajo na odru prej za bebčka kot velikega misleca, in ga po vsakem govoru dobesedno našenejo z odra, uspe izreči nekaj pomembnih in globokih misli. Njegov izrek »Ni dobro. Ampak je v redu.« se lahko bere kot zanikanje, kot mimikrija nečesa, kar razpada, pa je treba prikriti, ker ni moči in znanja, kako popraviti. Lahko pa tudi kot neki goli pozitivizem, pri čemer je, kljub temu da vse razpada, vse še vedno dobro, iz ničesar lahko naredimo več, še vedno lahko stvari postavimo na svoje mesto in nekaj naredimo iz tistega, kar imamo. Kot pravijo sami, gre pri predstavi za iznajdbo nove cirkuške discipline: *la grande désillusion* ali velike streznitve.

who will, on top of everything else, make a hole into the tent's roof... and vanish into the night sky. Nothing is more moving than the enthusiasm of a clown in a hopeless situation..." – Nikolaus. Everything is falling apart in the global crisis. How to maintain balance in a mixed-up, shaken-up, completely confused world? From time to time the spectacle steps out of its field and encompasses the contemporary world, denouncing its social and economic injustices, and speaking of the unjust distribution of wealth it invites us to be outraged. The clown philosopher Nikolaus, who is a juggler like no other, likes to mix philosophy and contemporary circus to reveal (and rearrange) the established order of things. In the real world Nikolaus, before venturing into the circus world, studied philosophy at Köln University. On stage he takes the role of philosopher at seemingly random moments – or by accident, since this role was not assigned to him – and is considered more of a fool than a great thinker, being literally chased from the stage after every speech. Still, he manages to deliver a few important and deep thoughts. His words "It isn't good. But it's all right." could be understood as denial, or as mimicry of a system that is falling apart but that is covered up since there is no power or knowledge to fix it. But it could also be read as naked positivism: in spite of everything falling apart everything is still good. We can make more out of nothing; we can still set things right and make something out of what we have. As the company say themselves, the performance is an invention of a new circus discipline: *la grande désillusion*, or a great disillusion.

As for myself, I can see a lot of physics in circus through this performance, and even more in some of the other works presented at CIRCca – works that are about experimenting and testing out materials, things, objects. How much weight could you add to something without it breaking in front of you, keeping it right at the limit between security and danger, to induce fear and unease in the spectators, but in the end to resolve this in relief? How many times, and with what weight and speed, could you turn up and down, go here and there, jump, spin and so on while interacting with the material world around you? Sometimes circus is nothing more than practical physics.



Cirque Aïtal – *Pour le meilleur et pour le pire* © Mario Del Curto

Sama tudi skozi to predstavo, še bolj pa skozi nekatere druge, vidim v cirkusu tudi veliko fizike, ko gre za eksperimentiranje in preizkušanje materialov, predmetov, objektov. Koliko še lahko obtežiš neko stvar, da se pred tabo ne bo polomila, da bo ravno na tisti meji med varnostjo in nevarnostjo, ki bo v gledalcih zbudila strah in nelagodje, a na koncu vodila v olajšanje, kolikokrat, s kakšno težo in hitrostjo se lahko zasukaš gor in dol, sem in tja, poskočiš, zavrtiš, in to v interakciji z materialnim svetom okrog sebe. Včasih cirkus ni nič drugega kot fizika v praksi.

Festival, ki ga po besedah umetniškega direktorja Marca Fouillanda pravico do tega, da ni popularen in všečen, ki ga ne sme biti strah tega, da bi bil nepopularen, je ponudil še kopico drugih predstav, o katerih bi bilo vredno razpravljati. Naj omenim še predstave La Meute skupine La Muete, Klaxon skupine Akoreacro, *Pour le meilleur et pour le pire* dua Aïtal, ter meni najljubšo Azimut, ki so jo

The festival – which according to the artistic director Marc Fouilland has the right to not be popular and likeable, and should not fear being unpopular – offered a slew of other performances worthy of discussion. Let me also mention the performances *La Meute* by the company of the same name, *Klaxon* by Akoreacro, *Pour le meilleur et pour le pire* by the duo Cirque Aïtal, and, my personal favorite, *Azimat*, prepared by Aurélien Bory and the Groupe Acrobatique de Tanger. As I am leaving a performance late at night on the last day of the festival, a young man crosses my path in the parking lot, points to the ground by the shrubbery, and says in surprise, “What is that? There on the ground?” As soon as I turn around and follow his gaze, his surprised look changes into a wide grin, and he says, “Oh, it is just your smile.” I pick it up, place it on my face, and laugh out loud. I put some of it in my pocket, for later.

pripravili Aurélien Bory in akrobatska skupina iz Tangerja, o kateri bom razpravljala drugje.

Ko zadnji dan festivala pozno ponoči zapuščam prizorišče, mi na parkirišču pot prekriža nek mladenič, pokaže na tla ob grmovju in začudeno reče »Kaj pa je tole? Tam na tleh?« V trenutku ko se obrnem in sledim njegovemu pogledu, se mu začuden pogled razpotegne v nasmeih in reče: »Oh, samo tvoj nasmeih je.« Poberem ga s tal, si ga dam na obraz in se naglas zasmejem. Nekaj ga spravim v žep, za kasneje.



# Always Keep Exploring – Circus and Cinema

TESSA OVERBEEK

CIRCa Festival, Auch, Southern France. Circus, circus and more circus. Sun, wine, good company. Watching performances, receiving information, sharing experiences, asking questions. What more could I wish for? Then why am I thinking about film? For me it was once the subject of six years of study, countless articles, research blueprints. My discovery of new circus marked the beginning of a gradual goodbye. Circus, so much older and yet so new, so rich and yet so undiscovered, so full of life and development. So here, so now, so real, so nearby. I had to know more about it.

This is how an exploration began. Cautiously at first, then vigorously. First with cinema at the back of my mind, then more on its own terms. That can and maybe even should be done. A frame of reference is available. Especially in France, where circus has fully developed itself, and even more so during CIRCa. Circus here, there and everywhere, in all its shapes and forms. And still there were these associations with film. There was no escaping it.

“Wong Kar-wai,” says Marie Molliens, star and director of *Morsure*, when we inquire after her sources of inspiration, “and Fellini.” Cinematographic, framed, restrained and intimate, with intense emotions right beneath the surface. That is the way she wanted it. Only then in the circus ring. It had to become a dark, personal performance about suppressed wildness and violence, about the bites we incur in life. A loose composition of present, past and dream it would be. We as audience members were to play along, question ourselves, actively make meaning. That was the intention.

We knew nothing about all of this, the day before, in Cie Rasposo’s tent. We were asked not to read

# Altijd blijven onderzoeken – Circus en cinema

TESSA OVERBEEK

Festival Circa, Auch, Zuid-Frankrijk. Circus, circus en nog eens circus. Zon, wijn, goed gezelschap. Voorstellingen kijken, informatie krijgen, ervaringen delen, vragen stellen. Meer kan ik me niet wensen. Waarom denk ik dan toch aan film? Voor mij ooit onderwerp van zes jaar studie, talloze stukken, onderzoeksplannen. Mijn ontdekking van het nieuwe circus was het begin van een geleidelijk afscheid. Circus, zoveel ouder en toch zoveel nieuwer, zo rijk en toch zo onontdekt, zo vol leven en ontwikkeling. Zo hier, zo nu, zo echt, zo dichtbij. Daar moest ik meer van weten.

Zo begon een verkenningstocht. Eerst voorzichtig, later voortvarend. Eerst met cinema in het achterhoofd, later steeds meer op zichzelf. Dat kan, mag, moet misschien zelfs. Het referentiekader is er. Zeker in Frankrijk, waar circus zich in de volle breedte heeft kunnen ontwikkelen. Zeker tijdens Circa. Circus voor en circus na, in allerlei verschijningsvormen. En toch steeds die associaties met film. Er was geen ontkomen aan.

‘Wong Kar-wai’, zegt Marie Molliens, ster en regisseuse van *Morsure*, gevraagd naar haar inspiratiebronnen, ‘en Fellini’. Cinematografisch, gekaderd, ingehouden en intiem, met vlak onder de oppervlakte intense emoties. Zo wilde zij het. Maar dan in de piste. Een donkere, persoonlijke voorstelling, over onderdrukte wildheid en geweld moest het worden, over de ‘beten’ die we oplopen in ons leven. Een losse compositie van heden, verleden en droom zou het zijn. Wij als publiek zouden het spel meespelen, onszelf bevragen, actief betekenis geven. Dat was de bedoeling.

Wij wisten van niets, de dag ervoor, in de tent van Cie Rasposo. Ons was verzocht ons niet in te



Cridacompany – *Manana es manana* © Etienne Perra

up on the performance, which proved unnecessary for finding influences of film in *Morsure*. I detected film noir in particular: shady men and a femme fatale, contrastive chiaroscuro light effects, sudden brawls in a smoky bar. A hint of Fellini, too, more glamorous than grotesque. A dashing diva chased by three men, crowding around a fan on a dolly. Huh?

Music of all times creates an impenetrable wall of sound. I can see neither man nor character, actions but no motives. Distracted by all kinds of things, I overlook important clues. I would like to play along, but how do I get through that cage? 'Watch me, but don't come any closer' is what the eyes of the blonde woman exude as she dances gracefully across the wire in the golden light. Or climbs the bars in a catlike way. From a safe distance, behind the influence of too many others, a true nature remains hidden.

"Circus is not pink, more brown," says Victor Cathala, one half of Cirque Aïtal. He and his partner Kati Pikkarainen understood this from a tour in the Swiss traditional circus Monti. That experience made them find their own voice. In Occitan, a regional language in the South of

lezen. Dat was ook niet nodig om de invloed van film in *Morsure* te bespeuren. Vooral *film noir* zag ik: duistere mannen en een *femme fatale*, contrastrijke *chiaroscuro* lichteffecten, plotselinge vechtpartijen in een rokerige bar. Een vleugje Fellini ook, maar meer glamoureuus dan grotesk. Een zwierige diva, achtervolgd door drie mannen, drommend rond een ventilator op een *dolly*. Huh?

Muziek van alle tijden creëert een ondoordringbare muur van geluid. Ik zie mens noch personage, handelingen maar geen motivaties. Afgeleid door van alles en nog wat zie ik belangrijke sleutels over het hoofd. Ik wil het spel wel spelen, maar hoe kom ik door die kooi? 'Kijk naar mij, maar kom niet dichterbij', zegt de blik van de blonde vrouw, terwijl ze sierlijk over het koord danst in het gouden licht. Of katachtig in de spijlen klimt. Op een veilige afstand, achter de invloeden van teveel anderen, houdt een ware aard zich verscholen.

'Circus is niet roze, eerder bruin', zegt Victor Cathala, de ene helft van Cirque Aïtal. Dat leerden hij en zijn partner Kati Pikkarainen vooral tijdens een tour met het traditionele Zwitserse circus Monti. In die omstandigheden vonden ze hun

UNPACK  
THE  
ARTS

France, 'Aital' means 'that's the way it is'. This embracing of reality can also be felt in their performance.

*Pour le meilleur et pour le pire* ('for better or for worse') is described as a road movie about circus life, where boundaries are eliminated. Between places, between people, between performance and relaxation, between public and private. Huddled together around the modest ring in their own tent, we wait for Victor and Kati. They enter in an old red car. This miraculous rattletrap is set, prop, light source, refuge and semi-character at once, and heightens the cinematic effects in the performance.

The tent is dark, except for the car. All attention is drawn to the couple inside. Lights off, lights on. Off. On. At every interval we see another stage in their passionate petting. Like jump cuts in editing. Full exposure is unnecessary. The imagination replaces what was cut out. But this is circus, not film. And yet... Victor and Kati are not standing in the ring, they are sitting in the car. Closed off from us. From the darkness we gaze upon them through the window frames. They seem unaware of our glances. The proximity almost becomes uncomfortable.

Voyeurism. A frequently used term in film theory. Especially from the 1970s onwards, when psychoanalysis became trendy. The pleasure of watching someone else unnoticed. As a theoretical concept it was already somewhat dated during my studies, but here it is relevant. Exactly because this is circus, not film. Because privacy is a theme in this performance. Then the lights are switched back on. We see each other, we see them, they see us.

Michel Cerda, with whom Victor and Kati collaborated for this performance, advised them to restrict contact with the audience every now and then. A smart move with strong effects. Gazes can be very commanding, especially in circus: 'Look at how virtuoso/funny/brave I am! That deserves a round of applause, doesn't it?' Taking them away is like giving the audience a form of freedom. To watch and react as it pleases. To close in.

eigen stem. In het Occitaans, een Zuid-Franse streektaal, betekent 'Aital' zoiets als 'het is zoals het is'. Eenzelfde omhelzing van de werkelijkheid voel je terug in hun voorstelling.

*Pour le meilleur et pour le pire* (in goede en slechte tijden) wordt omschreven als een 'road movie' over het circusleven. Waar grenzen opgeheven worden. Tussen plaatsen, tussen mensen, tussen optreden en ontspannen, tussen publiek en privé. Dicht op elkaar gepakt rond de bescheiden piste van hun eigen tent wachten we op Victor en Kati. Ze rijden binnen in een oude rode auto. Het wonderlijke barrel is set, prop, lichtbron, toevluchtsoord en semi-personage tegelijk, en zorgt bovendien voor de meest filmische effecten in de voorstelling.

De tent is donker, op de auto na. Alle aandacht gaat naar het stel dat erin zit. Licht uit. Licht aan. Uit. Aan. Na elke onderbreking een nieuw stadium van een vurige vrijpartij. Als 'jump cuts' in de filmmontage. Volledig tonen is niet nodig. De verbeelding vervangt wat weggesneden werd. Maar dit is circus; geen film. En toch... Victor en Kati staan niet in de piste, maar zitten in de auto. Afgesloten van ons. Vanuit de duisternis bezien wij hen door de kaders van de autoruiten. Zij lijken zich niet bewust van onze blikken. De nabijheid wordt bijna ongemakkelijk.

Voyeurisme. Een veelvoorkomende term in de filmtheorie. Vooral vanaf de jaren zeventig, toen de psychoanalytische benadering trendy werd. Het plezier van het ongezien kijken naar iemand die niet terug kan kijken. Als theoretisch concept tijdens mijn studie al aardig belegen, in dit geval toch relevant. Juist omdat het circus is, en geen film. Juist omdat privacy een thema is in deze voorstelling. Even later is het licht weer aan. We zien elkaar, we zien hen, zij zien ons.

Michel Cerda, met wie Victor en Kati samenwerkten aan de voorstelling, adviseerde hen het contact met het publiek zo nu en dan te beteugelen. Een slimme zet met sterke effecten. Blikken kunnen heel dwingend zijn, zeker in het circus: 'Kijk toch eens hoe virtuoos/grappig/dapper ik ben! Dat is toch een applausje waard!' Deze wegnemen is een vorm van vrijheid geven

As the performance progresses, the couple's 'playing' gradually moves towards 'being', though it remains a performance. More and more often, they let us watch without answering our looks. And when they dance their last dance in the warm light of the headlights, clouded by Auch's sand and dust, to the sound of a stripped-down version of 'Le vent nous portera', it proves nearly impossible to resist their hospitality. For a moment, we are part of their life. A life full of contrasts and ambiguities. As life is.

"In circus you get used to the risk, that is why we want to present it in a different way," says Julien Vittecoq, who co-founded the French-Catalan Cridacompany together with Jur Domingo. Therefore, they take risks in unexpected ways. They are multi-talented experimenters in circus, music, visual arts and film. Whatever the day may bring. For their latest performance, *Mañana es Mañana*, the duo collaborated with Gabriel Agosti and Anicet Léone. There was no clear-cut theme, only the will to live and create together. The human aspect is most important to them. Just like Cirque Aïtal, they allow us a look into their existence. They don't go easy on themselves. Or on us for that matter.

Three men in suits juggle a pile of potatoes on the ground, until one of them suddenly sinks his head into it. Jur, wearing a red dress, tries to tidy her hair with all her might and to put her heels on, incessantly being hindered by her male counterparts. Scowling but persevering, she lets it happen, her long lean limbs shaking as if charged with electricity. A near unbearable silence is broken by the sound of water splashing, and the increasingly disquieting cries of a crowing child.

Shreds from a fragmented performance. A series of sensory experiences. Few light and sound effects, no set, just a few props. Unfamiliar looks, sounds, situations. There is a discernible, yet abstract line through their movements – often circles. I feel estrangement and distance. In the black box of CIRCa's studio I miss the closeness of a ring. A frozen film image sticks to the rear wall.

Halfway through the performance, it suddenly starts to move. We watch the foursome in a van.

aan het publiek. Om te kijken en te reageren zoals het wil. Dichterbij te komen.

Naarmate de voorstelling vordert, beweegt het 'spelen' van het stel steeds meer richting 'zijn', al blijft het een performance. Steeds vaker laten ze ons kijken zonder onze blikken te beantwoorden. Als ze in het warme, door zand en stof uit Auch vertroebelde licht van de koplampen hun laatste dans maken op de klanken van een uitgekledede versie van *Le vent nous portera*, is het haast onmogelijk om hun gastvrijheid te weerstaan. Even zijn we deel van hun leven. Een leven vol contrasten en dubbelzinnigheden. Zoals het is.

'Binnen het circus raak je gewend aan het risico, daarom willen we het anders presenteren', aldus Julien Vittecoq, die samen met Jur Domingo de Frans-Catalaanse Cridacompany vormt. Dus nemen ze risico's op onverwachte manieren. Deze multitalenten experimenteren met circus, muziek, beeldende kunst en film. Wat de dag maar vraagt of brengt. Voor hun nieuwste voorstelling *Mañana es Mañana* werkte het duo samen met Gabriel Agosti en Anicet Léone. Een duidelijk thema hadden ze niet, alleen de wil om samen te leven en te creëren. Het menselijke aspect staat voor hen voorop. Net als Cirque Aïtal gunnen ze ons een blik op hun bestaan. Ze maken het zichzelf niet makkelijk. Ons trouwens ook niet.

Drie jongens in pak jongleren een berg aardappels op de grond, tot een van hen er opeens met zijn hoofd in verdwijnt. Jur, gehuld in een rood jurkje, probeert uit alle macht haar kapsel te fatsoeneren en haar hakjes aan te trekken, daarbij voortdurend gehinderd door haar mannelijke tegenspelers. Stuurs kijkend maar stug volhoudend laat ze het gebeuren, haar lange magere ledematen schudden alsof ze onder stroom staat. Een bijna ondraaglijke stilte wordt doorbroken door het geluid van spattend water en de steeds verontrustender klinkende kreten van een kraaiend kindje.

Flarden uit een fragmentarische voorstelling. Een reeks zintuiglijke ervaringen. Weinig licht- en geluidseffecten, geen decor, wel wat props. Ongewone blikken, geluiden, taferelen. Een lijn in de bewegingen - veel cirkels - is zichtbaar maar

Snow or rain or both. The same red dress, the same heels. A road trip through the mountains. Then sun, and wind. Tangled hair fluttering. Sleepy, cheerful eyes. A smile, a jump. Fear and freedom and joy. A key moment. Beyond the stage, it is film that forces life in, shows people behind performers. Friends and dangerous hobbies.

Risk. Of being smashed against the rocks. Not being understood. Not fitting in. Not even in circus. But together they fit, regardless of the differences. No matter how much they have seen of each other. A moment of recognition. I don't understand it but I feel it. Not even Mickey Mouse, shotguns or too much of a good thing can change that. Today I am touched by a couple of daredevils. Tomorrow is another day.

"I write with light," he says. And I understand. While he talks, I think about Alexandre Astruc and his *caméra stylo*. With this concept, he popularised the idea of a visionary film director as an *auteur*, using the camera as a pen and attaching to his film a unique signature. Even when the film is a cooperation of many. If I had to find an example of an *auteur* within circus – in a very broad sense – it would be him: Aurélien Bory of Cie 111.

There is much to say about Bory. I cannot do him justice here. Neither can I leave him unmentioned. His performances are multidisciplinary to such a degree that any classification fails. Visual theatre may be the closest approximation, he himself admits. He nearly always works with circus artists. In the first performance of Cie 111, he juggled. The modest cinematic elements in the latest performance, *Azimut*, with and particularly for the Groupe Acrobatique de Tanger, got me thinking.

About editing. Currently a prominent and self-evident part of film, but this was not always the case. Once, cinema as well as circus was largely about presentation. Simply showing. There were hardly any storylines in those early years. The technology developed, as well as its uses. There was an increasing attention to making something comprehensible to the audience out of mere

abstract. Ik voel vervreemding en afstand. In de zwarte doos van de Circa studio mis ik de nabijheid van de piste. Een bevroren filmbeeld plakt tegen de achterwand.

Ergens halverwege komt het opeens in beweging. We zien het viertal in een busje. Sneeuw of regen of allebei. Hetzelfde rode jurkje, dezelfde hoge hakjes. Een *roadtrip* door de bergen. Dan zon, en wind. Warrige wapperende haren. Slaperige, vrolijke ogen. Een glimlach, een sprong. Angst en vrijheid en vreugde. Een sleutelmoment. Voorbij het podium breekt juist film het leven open. Toont mensen achter performers. Vrienden en gevaarlijke hobby's.

Risico. Om te pletter te slaan. Niet begrepen te worden. Nergens bij te passen. Ook niet bij circus. Maar wel bij elkaar. Hoe verschillend je ook bent. Hoeveel je ook van elkaar ziet. Een vlaag van herkenning. Ik snap het niet maar voel het wel. Daar kunnen Mickey Mouse, jachtgeweren en teveel van het goede niets meer aan veranderen. Vandaag ben ik geraakt door een stelletje waaghalzen. Morgen zien we wel weer verder.

'Ik schrijf met licht', zegt hij. En ik begrijp het wel. Terwijl hij verder praat denk ik aan Alexandre Astruc en zijn *caméra-stylo* concept. Hiermee populariseerde hij het idee van de visionaire filmregisseur als *auteur*, die de camera gebruikt als pen en de film voorziet van zijn unieke handtekening. Ook al werkt hij met nog zoveel anderen samen. Als ik een voorbeeld van een *auteur* zou moeten noemen in circus - in de hele brede zin - dan is hij het wel: Aurélien Bory van Cie 111.

Over Bory valt veel te zeggen. Hem hier recht doen kan eigenlijk niet. Hem onvermeld laten evenmin. Zijn voorstellingen zijn zo multidisciplinair dat ze onmogelijk te classificeren zijn. Visueel theater komt misschien het meest dichtbij, zo geeft hij zelf ook toe. Hij werkt vrijwel altijd met circusartiesten. Zelf begon hij ooit in de eerste voorstelling van Cie 111 als jongleur. De kleine filmische elementen in zijn nieuwste, *Azimut*, die hij maakte met, maar vooral voor de Groupe Acrobatique de Tanger, zetten me aan het denken.

images and actions, still without text. To evoking meaning in between different shots.

In *Azimut* there is a short sequence of jump cut effects, similar to those of Cirque Aïtal. A woman shines a bright light alternately at the audience and at the stage behind her, each time illuminating a new scene. Those are strong images: every exposure causes a small shock. They remind of Sergei Eisenstein – a film auteur *avant la lettre* – who produced comparable effects in the 1920s with his ‘montage films’ and who had an important influence on the further development of film.

Just like him, Aurélien Bory plays with the audience’s perception through carefully devised visual compositions. Every time the striking moving images may become mesmerising, he changes the pattern and builds something entirely new, but not always through shock effects. He often provides enough time for the audience to reorientate. For us to take in and interpret the meticulous *mise en scène* he uses to communicate with us. Even more than one would assume, each element is meaningful to him. His highly associative way of working makes my imagination run wild, too. The connections within and between the images allow an almost frustratingly wide range of interpretations.

The Groupe Acrobatique de Tanger was closely involved in the creation process, he relates. He constructed *Azimut* around the historical, spiritual roots of their existence as acrobats. By this he reverts to a much older, more extensive tradition of acrobatics, of which circus is only a part. That was more interesting to him than its form. He offers new insights into acrobatics without showing much of it. The acrobats are both a source of inspiration and living material at once, their merits as valuable as any other element in the performance.

Eisenstein employed his actors in similar ways, following his mentor, constructivist theatre director Vsevolod Meyerhold, who built the set as a machine or track in which the actors moved. He also conceived the so-called biomechanical acting, in which the body itself is considered a

Over montage. Inmiddels een prominent en vanzelfsprekend element in film, maar dat is niet altijd zo geweest. Ooit draaide cinema, net als circus, vooral om presentatie. Eenvoudigweg tonen. Van verhaallijnen was in die vroege jaren nauwelijks sprake. De technologie ontwikkelde zich, net als het gebruik ervan. Er werd steeds meer nagedacht over hoe je met alleen beelden van taferelen of handelingen, nog zonder tekst, iets begrijpelijk kon maken voor een publiek. Hoe je tussen verschillende shots betekenissen op kon roepen.

In *Azimut* zit een korte sequentie met ‘jump cut’ effecten, vergelijkbaar met die bij Cirque Aïtal. Een vrouw schijnt met een felle lamp afwisselend op ons en op het podium achter zich, waar steeds een nieuw tafereel zichtbaar wordt. Krachtige beelden zijn het: iedere onthulling geeft een kleine schok. Ze doen denken aan Sergei Eisenstein, een filmauteur *avant la lettre*, die in de jaren twintig van de twintigste eeuw met zijn ‘montagefilms’ vergelijkbare effecten bereikte en van grote invloed zou zijn op de verdere ontwikkeling van de film.

Net als hij speelt Aurélien Bory in nauwkeurig uitgedachte visuele composities een spel met onze perceptie. Steeds als de oogstrelende bewegende beelden dreigen te hypnotiseren, doorbreekt hij de patronen en bouwt iets geheel nieuws op. Dat gebeurt niet altijd met schokeffecten. Vaak ook geeft hij ons de tijd om ons opnieuw te oriënteren. Om de minutieuze *mise-en-scène* waarmee hij tot ons spreekt in ons op te nemen en te duiden. Meer nog dan je zou verwachten is elk element daarin betekenisvol voor hem. Zijn zeer associatieve manier van werken doet ook mijn verbeelding op hol slaan. De relaties binnen en tussen de beelden staan bijna frustrerend veel interpretaties toe.

De Groupe Acrobatique de Tanger was nauw betrokken bij het creatieproces, vertelt hij. Hij construeerde *Azimut* rond de historische, spirituele wortels van hun bestaan als acrobaat. Daarmee grijpt hij terug naar een veel langere, bredere traditie van acrobatiek, waarvan circus slechts deel uitmaakt. Die vond hij interessanter dan de vorm ervan. Hij biedt nieuwe inzichten in

type of machine. For him, accurately performing a bodily movement was more important than emotional expression. Eisenstein was one among many who were inspired by Meyerhold's ideas. Where he himself found his inspiration? In the circus.

Towards the end of our session with Bory, he briefly mentions Meyerhold. There is not much time left for further questions, but I am intrigued. Circus and film, I have to know more about it. Back in the Netherlands, I read that Bory sometimes dreams away on this quotation from T. S. Eliot:

We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
[And know the place for the first time.]

acrobatiek, zonder er veel van te tonen. De acrobaten zijn tegelijkertijd inspiratiebron en levend materiaal; evenwaardig aan de andere elementen in de voorstelling.

Eisenstein gebruikte zijn acteurs op vergelijkbare manieren, in navolging van zijn mentor, de constructivistische theaterregisseur Vsevolod Meyerhold. Die bouwde decors als machines of parcours, waar acteurs doorheen bewogen. Hij bedacht ook het zogenaamde biomechanische acteren, waarbij het lichaam zelf als een soort machine wordt beschouwd. Het precies uitvoeren van lichamelijke bewegingen was voor hem belangrijker dan emotionele expressie. Eisenstein was een van de velen die geïnspireerd raakten door Meyerholds ideeën. Waar deze zelf inspiratie vond? In het circus.

Tegen het einde van onze sessie met Bory noemt hij Meyerhold kort. Veel tijd voor verdere vragen is er niet, maar ik ben geïntrigeerd. Circus en film, daar moet ik meer van weten. Terug in Nederland lees ik dat Bory graag wegdroomt bij dit citaat van T.S. Eliot:

*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
[And know the place for the first time.]*

# “About the seriousness of the joy of performance”

A few thoughts about the reception of circus from the perspective of dance and theatre theory

THOMAS SCHAUPP

*“I don't know exactly what the circus gave me. Except that I saw people risking their lives while being beautiful, for the enjoyment of their neighbours. But I think that's enough”*

MAXIM GORKI

I remember my childhood well and the visits of the circus. Once a year the colourful convoy of wagons drove into the central German town and pitched a large red and white striped or blue tent on the fairground. Then came the evening when I was finally allowed in, whether with the school class or my parents. The coloured lights shined seductively on the tent, which could be seen from far away. The people crowded at the entrance and once inside quickly searched for a seat. I never wanted to sit in the front row, just anywhere as long as the poles holding up the tent didn't obscure my view. And then the show began, the music rang out, clowns and acrobats performed, tamers with their animals. I eagerly watched the spectacle, mesmerised by the comic and the scary.

Many years after my last visit to the circus, I was able to immerse myself in this still fascinating art,

# „Über den Ernst der Spielfreude“

Ein paar Gedankenstriche zur Rezeption des Zirkus aus Perspektive der Tanz- und Theaterwissenschaft

THOMAS SCHAUPP

*„Ich weiß nicht genau, was mir der Zirkus gab, außer daß ich in ihm Menschen sah, welche mit Schönheit ihr Leben riskieren für das Vergnügen ihrer Nächsten, aber ich denke, daß dies genügt“*

MAXIM GORKI

Ich erinnere mich noch gut an meine Kindheit und die Besuche des Zirkus. Einmal im Jahr fuhr eine bunte Wagenkolonne in die mitteldeutsche Stadt ein und baute auf dem zentralen Festplatz ein großes rot-weiß gestreiftes oder blaues Zelt auf. Dann kam der Abend, indem ich letztlich rein durfte, ob ein Besuch mit der Schulklasse oder mit den Eltern. Auf dem Zelt leuchteten die bunten Lichter verlockend, man sah sie schon von weitem. Am Eingang schließlich drängten sich die Menschen und gerade rein gelangt suchte man sich hastig einen Platz. Ganz vorne wollte ich nie sitzen, aber doch so, dass die Stangen, die das Zelt halten, mich nicht allzu sehr störten. Und dann begann die Show, die Musik ertönte und Clowns und Akrobaten traten auf, Dompteure mit ihren Tieren. Gespannt schaute ich mir das Spektakel an, gebannt von Lustigem und Schaurigem.



invited as a cultural journalist to CIRCa – Festival du cirque actuel in Auch thanks to my profession as a dance and theatre scholar. For a number of years I have engaged myself intensively and extensively with the performing arts, yet the circus still remains a mystery to me. And not only to me – very few examine the circus in depth or even engage with it academically, and so its reception plays a minor role in the relevant subjects. An exception is perhaps France, where circus art is funded more than in any other European country. And why is that? What makes this art both special and resistant?

Let us return to the memories of the first evening of my residency in Auch. We attended *Tout est bien! Catastrophe et bouleversement* by Cie Pré-O-Coupé / Nikolaus. I did not know what to expect so I approached the evening with the usual attitude of an experienced audience member of stage spectacle – more wisely observant than filled with rapt anticipation.

It was already dark when I first glimpsed the tent. I was immediately seized by memories from my childhood. Suddenly there it stood, this large auspicious tent, bright and illuminated by crystals. And there it was again, the long queue at the entrance and the many conversations, the atmosphere filled with anticipation and expectation. And suddenly the show began, outside the entrance to the tent – three acrobats suddenly appeared on the steep, smooth roof and began an amusing game. They appeared to have fled the director who appeared on the ground in front of the chapiteau. She shouted at the three of them because they weren't where they were supposed to be, in the tent. I couldn't follow the heated conversation, as I have a limited grasp of the French language. But I looked up at the canvas mesmerised and watched the trio as they boldly jumped and slid.

Finally they all came down and opened the door to the inside and we could take our seats. There they were again, the masts and the ropes, all kinds of things. And there it was again, the smell I know only from my childhood memories. The smell of sawdust on the ground, of old wood and all sorts of other scents that these people bring

Viele Jahre später nun, der letzte Zirkusbesuch lag Jahre zurück, konnte ich wieder einmal eintauchen in diese nach wie vor faszinierende Kunst, eingeladen als ein Kulturjournalist zum CIRCa – Festival du cirque actuel in Auch, dank meiner Profession als Tanz- und Theaterwissenschaftler. Seit einigen Jahren schon beschäftige ich mich intensiv und in vielerlei Hinsicht mit den performativen Künsten, und doch blieb die Zirkuskunst mir bis anhin verborgen. Aber nicht nur mir - Nur wenige setzen sich eingehender oder gar wissenschaftlich mit dem Zirkus auseinander und so spielt seine Rezeption in den einschlägigen Fächern nur eine untergeordnete Rolle. Eine Ausnahme mag da vielleicht Frankreich sein, schließlich wird wohl in keinem anderen europäischen Land die Zirkuskunst mehr gefördert. Jedenfalls, woran mag dies liegen? Was macht diese Kunst so besonders und gleichzeitig resistent?

Tauchen wir ein in die Erinnerungen des ersten Abend meiner Residenz in Auch. Wir besuchten „*Tout es bien! Catastrophe et bouleversement*“ von der Cie Pré-O-Coupé/Nikolaus. Noch wusste ich nicht, was mich wirklich erwartet und so begegnete ich dem Abend zuvorderst mit der gewohnten Haltung eines erfahrenen Zuschauers von Bühnenspektakel – wohl eher abgeklärt abwartend als mit entzückter Vorfreude erfüllt.

Es war bereits dunkel als ich schließlich das Zelt erblickte. Sofort ergriffen mich wieder die Erinnerungen an meine Kindheit. Plötzlich stand es da, dieses große verheißende Zelt, hell und kristallen beleuchtet. Und da war sie wieder, die lange Schlange vor dem Einlass und die vielen Unterhaltungen, die Atmosphäre war mit Spannung und Vorfreude erfüllt. Und plötzlich, noch vor dem Einlass in das Zelt begann die Show – Auf dem steilen, glatten Zeltdach tauchten plötzlich drei Akrobaten auf und begannen ein lustiges Spiel. Sie schienen vor der Direktorin, die unten am Grund vor dem Chapiteau auftauchte, zu fliehen. Sie schrie die drei an, wohl, weil sie nicht da waren, wo sie sein sollten, im Zelt. Der hitzigen Unterhaltung konnte ich nicht folgen, dazu reichen meine Kenntnisse der französischen Sprache nicht. Voller Bannung aber schaute ich auf das Plastik und beobachtete

with them. My nose quivered with delight and the child from the past was awoken in me. And so I embraced their performance, where many artforms met: acrobatics, clowning, theatrical narrative forms, and also simple yet subtle technical show-stoppers. With one step on a board a whole row of machines jumped up: a hammer fell on the foot of one and his painful movement activated a rope and so on, until finally a bucket of water fell over. It was really funny! Later the director executed a whole series of movements, twisting up on a rope to dizzying heights, while two clowns played a form of badminton around her with ever-increasing difficulty and so on. Everything was underscored by a live orchestra and singing artists, sometimes sensuous, sometimes energetic. This variety, the juxtaposition of performances, differing from one another in form and content and certainly the story, made this evening and also the circus itself so unique and fascinating.

I laughed a lot but at times also held my breath, mesmerised, filled with an inner empathic fear: for instance when one of the acrobats, on a form of swing (please forgive my lack of technical terms) constantly see-sawed at least twenty metres above our heads while also preparing himself for a daring manoeuvre. He repeatedly slammed against the wall of the tent as he repeatedly and no less quickly swung just above our heads. Every rough movement made me flinch – it was as if one reproduced exactly his ‘world-weary’ movements. The potential danger was underscored beforehand when a number of the audience were moved to other seats so as not to be hit by his fall, or so I thought. Finally he suddenly shot – legs first – over my disbelieving eyes through the tent wall and was gone. After a few calm seconds came frenetic applause! The constant juxtaposition between shuddering and liberating laughter on this evening allowed the audience to immerse themselves in an emotional roller-coaster, which in this immediate, physically tangible form I so rarely encounter in dance or theatre. Yet during the shows I saw over the following four days of my residency in Auch it was an almost constant presence.

The shows *Pour le meilleur et pour le pire* by Cirque Aïtal, *Klaxon* by Cie Akoreacro, and

die drei, wie sie dort waghalsig herum turnten und -rutschen.

Schließlich kamen sie alle runter und öffneten das Tor zum Innern und wir konnten uns unsere Plätze suchen. Da waren Sie wieder die Masten und Seile, allerlei Krempel. Und da war er wieder, dieser Geruch, den ich so nur aus meinen Kindheitserinnerungen kannte. Der Geruch des Sägemehls auf dem Boden, von altem Holz und allerlei anderen Düften, die die Menschen so mit sich bringen. Meine Nase bebte vor Entzücken, es weckte dieses Kind von damals in mir. Und so ließ ich mich ein auf ihr Spiel. In ihm treten allerlei Kunstformen aufeinander, Akrobatik, Clownerie, theatrale Erzählformen und auch einfache aber raffinierte technische Blickfänge. So trat ein Sprung auf ein Brett eine ganze Batterie aufeinander folgender Maschinerien los: da viel ein Hammer auf den Fuß des einen und seine schmerzverzerrte Bewegung betätigte ein Seil und so weiter und alles ließ schließlich einen Eimer Wasser umkippen. Witzig war das, für wahr! Später vollzog die Direktorin allerlei Bewegungen gewunden in einem Seil auf schwindelerregender Höhe, während zwei Clowns eine Art Badminton mit verschärften Schwierigkeiten um sie herum spielten und so weiter. Alles untermalt von einem live spielenden Orchester und den dazu mal eher sinnlich, mal energisch singenden Artisten. Erst diese Vielfalt, das Nebeneinander von Darbietungen, die sich für sich in Form und Inhalt und sicherlich auch Geschichte voneinander unterscheiden, macht diesen Abend und wohl auch den Zirkus an sich so einzigartig und faszinierend.

Ich habe viel gelacht, und doch auch viele Momente gebannt innegehalten, erfüllt von einer inneren empathischen Angst: Etwa als einer der Akrobaten, auf einer Art Schaukel (man verzeihe mir die Unkenntnis der Fachbegriffe) in sicherlich zwanzig Meter Höhe stets über unseren Köpfen hinweg wippte und sich auch noch anschickte, waghalsige Manöver dabei zu vollziehen. Dabei prallte er immer wieder mit dem Körper auf die Wand des Zeltes, bevor er sich wieder und wieder und nicht minder schnell nur knapp über unseren Köpfen hinweg schwang. Jede ruppige Bewegung ließ mich zusammenzucken – es war, als vollziehe

*Morsure* by Cie Rasposo are also performed in classic chapiteaux and filled with simultaneously acrobatic, humorous but also theatrical elements. Only in the last piece was an animal, a fully-fledged tiger, an element of the show. His performance impressively epitomised the special atmosphere that is intrinsic to every visit to the circus. So wrote the author Carl Zuckmayer, who also wrote a play about the circus, *Katharina Knie*: "What makes the circus so festive is the seriousness of the joy of performance. A theatre piece has only one premiere for which one says 'Break a leg', where one can experience success but also 'break a neck'. In the circus every evening is the premiere. Every day in front of every audience it is all or nothing, again and again the great risks – again and again the great joy of success! Here the seriousness, the hard work becomes unbounded and liberating, a celebratory game."

Every evening anew, the artists expose themselves to diverse dangers, whether it be a fall from a great height or, as in *Morsure*, the deadly bite of a predator. In the news we – luckily rarely – encounter shocking reports about the tragic death of artists. And so I, not least as audience member, am constantly aware of the dangers. This is in counterpoint to the theatrical and humorous context and the effortless expressions of the artists, which creates a creed where the seriousness of the performance ultimately precedes the beauty and fascination of the body (as) art. It is an artistic display of the impressive abilities of the human nature, physically and mentally. The artists are primarily concerned with their own technical and mental performance and their own limits, which places them quasi in a tense situation with the other artists, or with technical aids such as the rope, the swing or even the animal. In my opinion this risky physical exploration of limits is displayed in no other performative art as it is in the circus. I myself, as audience member, am always brought anew to an excited state of mesmerised rigour and unbridled relief – subjected to my own physical and mental re-enactment of the risks.

Much work in the modern circus seems to be about social processes, something not associated

man seine „lebensmüden“ Bewegungen regelrecht nach. Das Gefahrenpotential dessen wurde noch untermalt dadurch, dass zuvor einige Zuschauer auf andere Plätze verwiesen wurden, um für alle Fälle eines Absturzes nicht getroffen zu werden, so denke ich. Schließlich schoss er plötzlich, mit den Beinen zuerst, über meinem ungläubigen Augen durch die Zeltwand, und weg war er. Nach ein paar ruhigen Sekunden folgte frenetischer Applaus! Dieses stete Nebeneinander von Erschauern und befreiendem Lachen an diesem Abend ließ den Zuschauer eintauchen in ein Wechselbad der Gefühle, jenes mir in dieser unmittelbaren, körperlich-erfahrbaren Form im Tanz oder Theater nur sehr selten begegnete, an den darauffolgenden Shows in der insgesamt vier Tage währenden Residenz in Auch jedoch nahezu ständig präsent blieb.

Die Stücke „Pour le meilleur et pour le pire“ von Cirque Aïtal, „Klaxon“ von Cie Akoreacro oder „Morsure“ von Cie Rasposo fanden ebenso in klassischen Chapiteaus statt und waren erfüllt vom Nebeneinander akrobatischer, humoresker, aber auch theatraler Elemente. Nur im letzteren Stück war ein Tier, ein ausgewachsener Tiger auch Bestandteil der Show. Sein Auftritt versinnbildlichte auf besonders eindrückliche Weise die besondere Atmosphäre, die jeden Zirkusbesuch immanent begleitet. So schrieb etwa der Schriftsteller Carl Zuckmayer, der auch ein Schauspiel über den Zirkus, „Katharina Knie“, schuf: „Was uns im Zirkus festlich stimmt, ist der Ernst der Spielfreude. Ein Theaterstück hat einmal Premiere, zu der man sich 'Hals- und Beinbruch' wünscht, bei der man Erfolg haben oder auch 'das Genick brechen' kann. Im Zirkus ist jeden Abend Premiere. Jeden Tag vor jedem Publikum geht es ums Ganze, immer wieder das große Risiko – immer wieder die hohe Freude des Gelingens! Da wird die ernste, die harte Arbeit zum gelösten und erlösendem, zum festlichen Spiel“.

Jeden Abend aufs Neue setzen sich die Artisten also vielfältigen Gefahren aus, ob etwa dem Absturz von ordentlichen Höhen oder, wie eben in „Morsure“, dem tödlichen Biss eines Raubtiers. In den Nachrichten begegnen wir zum Glück selten aber doch ab und an den schockierenden



Cie Rasposo – *Morsure* © Florence Delahaye

with traditional circus, if my childhood memory doesn't deceive me. Today I think that back then the artist was a body, unfulfilled by other more profound messages. An exciting example of this change was the visit to *Pour le meilleur et pour le pire*: the two artists Kati Pikkarainen and Victor Cathala entertainingly tell of their daily life as lovers, constantly wandering from circus show to circus show (they are also in 'real' life a couple). At the start of the show they drive into the circus ring in a small red car and park up for a rest. At the same time they love and tease each other and finally reconcile, with constant brave acrobatic manoeuvres and small gesture-narrative interludes. Using theatrical means they reveal the oft recited, classical notions of the liberal life of the artist. With *Tout est bien! Catastrophe et bouleversement* Pré-O-Coupé and Nikolaus even provide their show with an artistic statement about the current social processes in this times of financial crisis. They wrote in their programme: "When there are rumours about the end of a world, the most sensitive keep looking for balance, even in loss of balance, grace among the rubbish, lyricism in decomposition, rise in collapse." Here for real, the beautiful essence and risk of acrobatics is interwoven with the turmoil of

Meldungen über den tragischen Tod von Artisten. Und so bin ich mir als Zuschauer nicht zuletzt auch immer wieder dieser Gefahr bewusst. Der theatrale und mithin humoreske Rahmen und die unangestrenzte Mimik der Artisten stehen dazu im Kontrapunkt und schaffen so ein Credo, dass dem Ernst des Spiels jedoch letztlich die Schönheit und Faszination der Körper(als)kunst voranstellt. Es ist eine künstlerische Zurschaustellung der beeindruckenden Fähigkeit menschlicher Natur, körperlich wie psychisch. Die technischen und geistigen Leistungen der Artisten stehen dabei in erster Linie in Bezug zu sich selbst und ihren eigenen Grenzen und werden gleichsam in ein Spannungsverhältnis gesetzt zu den anderen Artisten, technischen Hilfsmitteln, etwa dem Seil, der Schaukel und anderem oder eben dem Tier. Meinem Ermessen nach wird diese riskante körperliche Auslotung von Grenzen in keiner performativen Kunst so sehr zur Schau gestellt wie im Zirkus. Mich als Zuschauer hat sie immer wieder aufs Neue an eigene, durchaus spannende Grenzzustände von gebannter Starre und ungebändigter Erleichterung gebracht – stets dem eigenen körperlichen und geistigen Nachvollzug des Risikos unterworfen.

Viele Arbeiten des zeitgenössischen Zirkus scheinen sich darüber hinaus aber auch mit sozialen Prozessen auseinanderzusetzen, etwas, was man dem traditionellen Zirkus eher abzusprechen vermag, sofern mich da meine Kindheitserinnerung nicht allzu sehr täuschen. Damals, so scheint mir zumindest heute, war der Artist vor allem Körper, unerfüllt von weiterer tiefsinnigeren Botschaft. Spannendes Beispiel für diesen Wandel war etwa der Besuch von „Pour le meilleur et pour le pire“: Die beiden Artisten Kati Pikkarainen und Victor Cathala erzählen auf sehr unterhaltsame Art über ihr alltägliches Leben als Liebespaar auf ständiger Wanderschaft von Zirkusshow zu Zirkusshow (Die beiden sind auch im „echten“ Leben ein Paar). Zu Beginn der Show fahren die beiden mit einem kleinen roten Auto in die Manege ein und scheinen es zur Rast zu parken. Dabei lieben und necken sich die beiden immer wieder und versöhnen sich schließlich, stets während mutiger akrobatischer Manöver und kleinen gestisch-erzählenden Einlagen. Sie entlarven mit theatralen Mitteln die allzu oft

our modern times. Precisely this tendency for the political theatrical enrichment of modern circus should enable new avenues of academic reception and legibility of acrobatic physical culture.

Since the age of mechanisation and industrialisation, the visit to the glittering chapiteau has been a joyously anticipated relief from the strict factual daily life for both young and old. Hardly any other performative artform is still so open to the whole family. "The circus," said Ernest Hemingway, "is the only ageless delight that you can buy for money." During my days in Auch when I looked across the circus ring at the audience I saw many children, and both young and older adults sitting next to each other quite normally. One repeatedly heard the children loudly commenting on the events, asking curious questions, or sometimes howling. I must admit this took some getting used to, as I am accustomed to the constant quiet attendance of a theatre or dance piece. The author Friedrich Dürrenmatt wrote these revealing words about this attitude: "I love the circus audience, because I love the many children. As opposed to the circus there are already educational elements to be found in theatre: in addition there is the notion of being in a holy place. For these reasons the theatre audience is much less sympathetic than the circus visitor." His statement can surely be countered with criticism, especially in view of the fact that the modern circus obviously no longer detracts from the "educational elements" as Dürrenmatt provokingly formulated them, but instead increasingly sets social reality against an artistic statement.

And yet, perhaps this is why this unique art form still delights so many people today. While contemporary theatre and especially dance, through the general audience, continues to offer the attribute of not understanding or not being understood, the circus with its own artistic elements offers entertainment for everyone. But perhaps this is the reason why until now academia has been reluctant to research the circus phenomenon deeper. In the end it is probably always the incomprehensible that attracts the interests of research. That which

rezitierte und klassische Vorstellung vom freiheitlichen Leben der Artisten. „Tout est bien! Catastrophe et bouleversement“ geben mit ihrem Stück gar ein künstlerisches Statement auf aktuelle gesellschaftliche Prozesse in Zeiten der Finanzkrise. So schreiben sie in ihrem Programm: „When there are rumors about the end of a world, the most sensitive keep looking for balance, even in loss of balance, grace among the rubbish, lyricism in decomposition, rise in collapse“. Hier verweben sich für wahr die schönen Essenzen und Risiken der Akrobatik mit den Tumulten unserer heutigen Zeit. Gerade diese Tendenz der politisch-theatralen Bereicherung im zeitgenössischen Zirkus sollte auch neue Zugänge zur wissenschaftlichen Rezeption und Lesbarkeit von akrobatischer Körperkultur ermöglichen.

Der Besuch der glitzernden Chapiteaus ist schon seit dem Zeitalter der Technisierung und Industrialisierung für Jung und Alt ein freudig erwarteter Ausgleich vom strengen, sachlichen Alltag gewesen. Kaum eine andere performative Kunstform ist darüber hinaus nach wie vor so sehr offen für die ganze Familie. „Der Zirkus“, so Ernest Hemingway, „ist die einzige nicht an Lebensjahre gebundene Freude, die man für Geld kaufen kann“. Wenn ich in den Tagen in Auch so meine Blicke durch die Manegen und Zuschauerräume lenkte, sah ich viele Kinder, junge und ältere Erwachsene selbstverständlich nebeneinander sitzen. Immer wieder hörte man die Kinder lautstark Geschehnisse kommentierend oder den Eltern neugierige Fragen stellend, auch mal heulend. Ich muss zugeben, dass das für mich gewöhnungsbedürftig war, bin ich selbst geprägt von dem steten stillen Beiwohnen eines Theater- oder Tanzstücks. Der Schriftsteller Friedrich Dürrenmatt sagte dazu einmal in diese Haltung entlarvenden Worten: „Ich liebe das Zirkuspublikum, weil ich die vielen Kinder liebe. Im Gegensatz zum Zirkus finden sich im Theater bereits Bildungselemente; dazu kommt die Vorstellung an einer geweihten Stätte. Aus diesen Gründen ist mir das Theaterpublikum wesentlich weniger sympathisch als der Zirkusbesucher“. Seine Aussage kann man sicherlich mit Kritik begegnen, gerade auch in Hinblick darauf, dass sich der zeitgenössische Zirkus offenbar den

excites the masses is often misunderstood as cabaret or awakens subliminal political-social apprehensions. At the same time the artistic happenings in the halls and chapiteaux offer lots of exciting 'explosive material' for questioning the physical (culture) and representational narrative with the help of bold risk and unbridled lightness and irony. They are in fact an ode to the seriousness of the pleasure of performing! In me they are awoken!

„Bildungselementen“, wie Dürrenmatt provozierend formulierte, eben nicht mehr entzieht, sondern sich zunehmend den sozialen Realitäten stellt und ein künstlerisches Statement entgegen setzt.

Und doch, im Übrigen vielleicht nunmehr auch gerade deswegen ist diese einzigartige Kunstform auch heutzutage noch so viele Menschen begeisternd. Während dem zeitgenössischen Theater und vor allem Tanz durch den allgemeinen Zuschauer immer wieder das Attribut des Nichtverstehens bzw. des Nicht-Verstanden-werdens angetragen wird, bietet der Zirkus auf Grund seiner im Eigenen künstlerischen Elemente Unterhaltung für jeden. Aber vielleicht ist gerade dies der Grund, warum sich die Wissenschaft bisher noch sträubt, dem Phänomen Zirkus tiefer auf den Grund zu gehen. Schließlich waren es schon immer die vermeintlich unverständlichen Dinge, die das Interesse der Forschung anziehen. Das, was die Masse begeistert wird allzu oft als Kleinkunst missverstanden oder weckt gar unterschwellig politisch-soziale Bedenklichkeiten. Dabei bieten die artistischen Geschehnisse in den Hallen und Chapiteaus eine Menge spannenden „Zündstoff“ für Fragen an Körper(kultur) und darstellerischer Erzählweise mit Hilfe der Demonstration von waghalsigem Risiko und ungebändigter Leichtigkeit und Ironie. Sie sind für wahr eine Ode an den Ernst der Spielfreude! In mir ist jener und jene geweckt!



Circus  
centrum

KØBENHAVNS INTERNATIONALE TEATER

SUBTOPIA°

FESTIVAL  
NOVOG CIRKUSA



les halles



Sirkuksen  
Tiedotuskeskus

CircusInfo Finland



## Partners

### PROJECT LEADER:

- Circuscentrum (B)

### CO-ORGANIZERS:

- Copenhagen International Theatre (DK)
- CIRCa (FR)
- Festival novog cirkusa (HR)
- Subtopia (SE)
- Halles de Schaerbeek (B)
- Finnish Circus Info Centre (FI)
- Circusstad Festival Rotterdam (NL)
- Humorologie (B)
- Crying Out Loud (UK)

UNPACK  
THE  
ARTS



Culture

This project has been funded with support of the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

© Unpack the Arts. Only the project leader and co-organisers of Unpack the Arts can freely use this publication. If another organization or medium wants to publish (extracts of) the article, please contact [maarten@circuscentrum.be](mailto:maarten@circuscentrum.be).

www.  
unpack  
thearts  
.eu

Coordination publication:

Maarten Verhelst

English editing:

John Ellingsworth

Graphic design:

Wilfrieda Paessens

[www.wilfrieda.com](http://www.wilfrieda.com)

UNPACK  
THE  
ARTS